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# JANE

A Farce in Three Acts

BY

HARRY NICHOLLS AND W. LESTOCQ

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# JANE

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*Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, 18th December, 1890.*

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## CHARACTERS.

Charley Shackleton.....	Mr. C. H. HAWTREY.
Mr. Kershaw.....	Mr. H. KEMBLE.
William Tipson.....	Mr. CHARLES BROOKFIELD.
Mr. Pixton.....	Mr. E. M. ROBSON.
Claude.....	Master R. SAKER.
Jane.....	Miss LOTTIE VENNE.
Mrs. Chadwick.....	Miss C. EWELL.
Lucy Norton.....	Miss ETHEL MATHEWS.
Mrs. Pixton.....	Miss ADA MURRAY.

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ACT I.—MORNING. ACT II.—AFTERNOON.

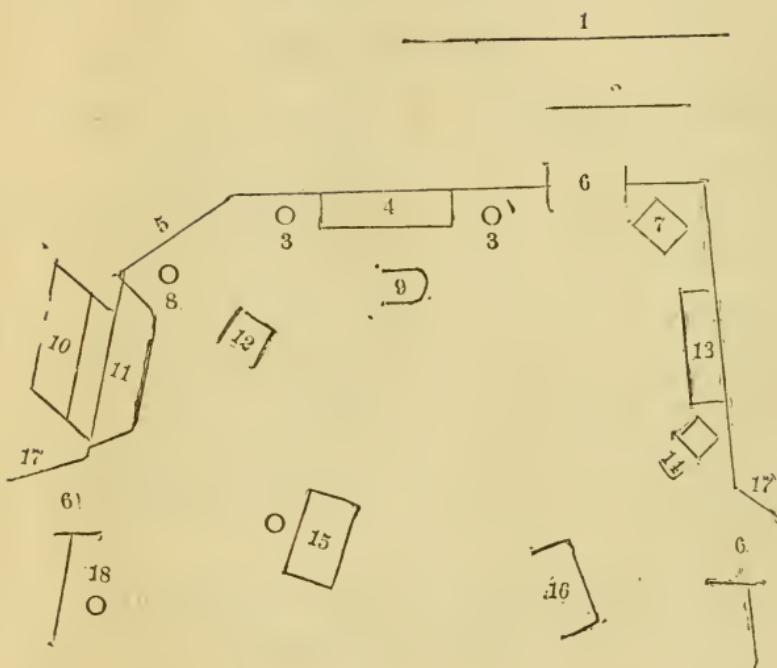
ACT III.—EVENING.

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SCENE—SHACKLETON'S ROOM.

# JANE

## ACT I.



1. Hall backng ; 2. Large oak cabinet with china, etc. 3. Stands with plants ; 4. Writing table with date box, candlesticks, etc. ; 5. Fireplace ; 6. Doors ; 7. Grandfather clock ; 8. Chair ; 9. Elbow chair ; 10. Screen for Shackleton's change ; 11. Cabinet with nick-nacks, cigar boxes, books, plants, flowers, etc. ; 12. Heavy armchair ; 13. Sideboard with clothes brush on it ; 14. Small table with nick-nacks, including box of cigarettes and court guide ; 15. Table with bowl of flowers and three or four newspapers on it ; 16. Settee ; 17. Interior backing ; 18. Small table with small plant on it. Large paper knife and matches in fancy stand.

# “JANE.”

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## ACT I.

SCENE—Bachelor Chambers, handsomely furnished.

*Doors down R. and L. and L.C.; fireplace across top R. corner of room. Music to take the curtain up.*

CLAUDE discovered looking into drawers at writing table.  
Comes down C. and picks up newspaper on table R. and sits on settee L. CLAUDE is a page-boy not in livery.

CLAUDE—I ought to have found out something about the governor and his affairs by this time, for I've been here ever since last night. There's something a-goin' on, and that William the valet's in it. I believe he's a-goin' on with Jane the slavey. They're both gone out this morning, and William's given me 'arf-a-crown not to say nothing about it (*looks up from paper*)—I won't unless I'm arst. But I *should* like to know what's a goin' on! Meal-times is the best to find out, 'cos people talk when they're eating. (*Reads paper again.*) No noos, not a prize fight nor nothing!

(Enter WILLIAM C.)

WILLIAM—(*Comes C.*)—Now then, young feller, put down that paper. (*Claude puts down paper on settee*)—Do you know the front door was left open?

CLAUDE—Yus!

WILLIAM—What's *that* for?

CLAUDE—(*Rise*)—Saves goin' to answer it every time!

WILLIAM—(*After an admiring pause*)—This is not your first situation, I persoom?

CLAUDE—(*Rise and go a little L.*)—No, I've been out before!

WILLIAM—And you'll be out again pretty sharp, if you don't watch it. Come now, move about—and don't let

me 'ave to tell you about it agen, or else there'll be a row. D'ye hear? (Postman's knock.) Go and answer that!

CLAUDE—(Going up C.)—There, that's what I mean! (Goes up C.) I've got to go all that way on purpose. (At door)—Oh, William, you've got a lot to learn.

(Exit sighing.)

WILLIAM—(Goes a little up C. after Claude. in a rage)— Well, of all the— (Stops, turns, comes down again, having controlled his temper). No. William, no! not to-day. This day, of all days, you can afford to keep your temper, for you're married to the girl of your 'art. La-da-di! (Dancing—stops suddenly.) Stop, though! We must keep it quiet for the present; the Governor mustn't know that I'm married to my fellow servant, for when he engaged me he says: "You're not married, are you? 'Cos I don't want no married couples about me!"

(CLAUDE appears suddenly C.)

CLAUDE—Jane!

WILLIAM—(Starting)—What?

CLAUDE—Just come in!

WILLIAM—(Relieved)—Oh! Where is she?

CLAUDE—Gone to take off her things. (Confidentially, coming down)—I say, William, what's up?

WILLIAM—(R.C.)—What do you mean?

CLAUDE—(L.C. a little up)—Where 'ave you two been together this morning?

WILLIAM—(Through his teeth)—Shut up!

CLAUDE—(Coming nearer and looking up knowingly)— You ain't gone and got married, have you?

WILLIAM—(Turns on Claude suddenly, takes him by the coat and shakes him)—You young vagabond, I'll break every bone in your skin. (Business.)

CLAUDE—(Freeing himself)—There, that'll do! I only asked for information. (Going up C.) But she's a nice girl, and I won't see her trifled with. (Up at door C., turns.) Then I have your word that you are not married?

WILLIAM—(Beside himself)—Confound! (In a hoarse whisper)—No!

CLAUDE—Good! Then there'll be a chance for me—(William runs up after him.)

(Exit CLAUDE C.)

WILLIAM—(As before)—I'll murder that—(Turns, comes down as before)—No, William, no! not to-day—on some future occasion. (Coming R.C.) Well, things are coming all right for us! I've all but arranged to buy the milk-walk that we saw advertised—we've paid the deposit, and we've nearly got enough for the pur-

chase money ; and when the Governor pays us our arrears of wages, we can plank it down and commence a life of unadulterated bliss—at least, as *nearly unadulterated* as a milk walk will allow. La-da-di—(does a little tripping dance up to C. door, and then he opens it, stops, looks off.) Ah ! Here she comes ! Bless her, she's a clever girl ! Now, who'd think to look at her that she was a married woman ? And she belongs to me ! (Comes down, looks about nervously, and then shouts in a whisper)—Hooray !

(WILLIAM is R.C. as Jane enters, after having looked at her admiringly for a second or two, goes cautiously to Shackleton's door R., looking through keyhole, listens, &c. Enter JANE very demurely, in cap, apron, &c., duster or dusting-brush. She commences dusting things on sideboard L., looking at William, who is listening for a moment at Shackleton's door R. He pantomimes "all right !" She puts down brush, they come C. and have a good hug, and then she resumes dusting business—all done very quietly.)

JANE—(These first few speeches rather *sotto voce*)—We've managed it splendidly—haven't we ?

WILLIAM—Proper !

JANE—Master back yet ?

WILLIAM—I don't know—I should think so.

JANE—(Comes L.C.)—I suppose he really *would* be annoyed if he knew ?—(Sits on R. arm of settee L.)

WILLIAM—(R.C.)—Well, anyhow, I'm not going to risk it. I told you what he said when he engaged me—he's such a peculiar cove ! Although you and I really were strangers to each other before I came here, he'd never believe it ; he'd think we got into the place by fraud or something, so we must keep it quiet.

JANE—(Rise)—Quite right, dear.

WILLIAM—(With enthusiasm)—Oh, don't ! You shouldn't, really ! Oh ! I must—(They get to C. and hug, then resume dusting. Jane goes down L., up L., then round to C.)—You've got your marriage lines, haven't you ? —(Cutting newspaper.)

JANE—Well, I should think so !

WILLIAM—Don't you think you'd better let me have them ?

JANE—Certainly not !

WILLIAM—Well, let's have a look at them.

JANE—(Comes C. producing marriage certificate)—Here you are then—(William puts his arm round her waist.)

WILLIAM—Ain't it lovely—(They look at each other, an'

*sigh sentimentally*)—to think that that little bit of paper makes you and me—er—ours—it's like a picter, ain't it! We'll havo it framed in the shop, *darling*!

JANE—I think not, *dearie*!

WILLIAM—Oh, gracious, you shouldn't—(*Hugs her. When he is hugging her he sees the wedding ring*)—Here, look here, you musn't wear this.

JANE—But I'm proud of it.

WILLIAM—But people will suspect you.

JANE—Oh! very well, I'll take it off!

WILLIAM—(*Seriously*)—Well, it had better be done, of course, but I don't half like it. It's so unlucky, you know.

JANE—(*Looking round cautiously*)—You superstitious goose! (*Kisses him.*)

(Enter CLAUDE with letters C.; they confusedly retire; William cuts papers, and Jane resumes dusting.)

CLAUDE—(*Aside at door*)—There is something going on!

JANE—(L.)—What do you want?

CLAUDE—(*Coming down*)—Here's master's letters.

WILLIAM—(R. Sharply)—Take them to him, then!

CLAUDE—He ain't back from his ride yet.

WILLIAM—Then put 'em down. (*Goes to R. with newspaper and paper knife.*)

CLAUDE—(C. mildly)—Don't you address me like that, William, I am not to be drove!

WILLIAM—If you give me any of your— (*Goes up to fireplace and puts paper on seat.*)

JANE—Hush, William, don't speak to the boy like that.

CLAUDE—See? There's the difference! Do you ask me to put 'em down?

JANE—Yes, I do, Claude. (*Smiling at him.*)

CLAUDE—(*As he goes to table R.*)—How can I refuse?

(*Puts letters on table R.H., goes up C.*) (*At door*)—Jane, you are a daisy, and I think we shall cotton on! (*William, from fireplace, runs across to Claude, with paper knife in his hand.*)

(*Exit CLAUDE C; Jane laughs.*)

WILLIAM—(*Throws paper knife on writing table*)—Don't you be surprised to hear that something's happened to that boy before long. (*Comes down C.*)

JANE—(*Tickling his face with dusting brush*)—Never mind him. (*Crosses R.; looks at letters on table R.*) I wonder if there's any bad news for master this morning.

WILLIAM—(*Coming down L.C.*)—It'll be a novelty for him if there ain't; he'll feel as if there's something wrong.

(*Sits on sofa L., and Jane goes to dust sideboard R.*) I never knew a man in such a state of hardupishness in all my born days! And the life he leads! Night after night—and him engaged to be married, too! Upon my word I think his sweetheart, Miss Norton, ought to be told about it. If she knew of his goings on she'd—

JANE—(*At sideboard R., turning and speaking over shoulder*)—I suppose you've gone on in your time, haven't you?

WILLIAM—Never!

JANE—(*Comes C.*)—William, don't commence your married life with falsehood!

WILLIAM—Oh, come, I say—(*Rising quickly and coming C.*)

SHACK.—(*Heard off C. calling*)—William!

WILLIAM—(*In answer to Shack.*)—Sir! (To Jane)—Don't you flatter yourself as you've married a man with a romantic past.

SHACK.—(*Off.*)—William!

WILLIAM—(*To Shack.*)—Sir!

JANE—Well, I don't care about your past, dear, it's the present is all as concerns me.

WILLIAM—So it does me. Give us another kiss!

JANE—Can't, here's master. (*Goes down R., then up R., and dusts, &c.*)

(Enter SHACK. C. in riding boots and breeches: comes down R., followed by Claude a few seconds after, so as to turn himself properly to door for his laugh, and not wait about evidently for his cue.)

SHACK.—(*As he walks down to R.*)—William!

WILLIAM—Sir!

SHACK.—Why on earth don't you answer me?

WILLIAM—I have answered you, sir!

SHACK.—Well, what's the good of that—(*C. in front of table R.*)

CLAUDE—(*At back C.*)—Ha! ha! ha! (They both turn suddenly—Claude subsides, and sneaks out C.)

SHACK.—That's the new boy, isn't it?

WILLIAM—Yes, sir!

SHACK.—He must be made to keep his place. (*Sits R. of table C.*)

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—He'll lose it, if I can help him!

SHACK.—Give me my letters.

(William gives him letters, then turns and kisses his hand to Jane, who exits C.)

(Reads)—“Sir, unless”—(Throws it on the table, opens another, reads)—“Sir, we are very much surprised”—(Throws it on table).

WILLIAM—(*Picks it up and looks at it*)—You haven't paid them, have you, sir?

SHACK.—(*Opens another*)—“Sir, we should be very much obliged”—(*Opens another, and reads*)—“Dear sir, would you kindly officiate as steward of a fancy dress ball at the Freemasons' Tavern?” No, I won't. Answer that, William. Say I won't.

WILLIAM—Give any reasons, sir?

SHACK.—I leave that to you.

WILLIAM—Very good, sir. (*Looks at letter*). Rather influential list. I think I'd better send your name in, sir.

SHACK.—Oh, all right. (*Reads*)—“Dear sir, I do beg of you to have a little on 'Truthful Tommy' to-morrow. He is sure to win. He is something out of the common.” See to that, William.

WILLIAM—Yes, sir; I'll put you on a tenner each way.

(*Pause.*)

SHACK.—From Mr. Kershaw! (*Reads it to himself, gives a low whistle. Rise. William goes up to fireplace, brings newspaper down. Crosses L.*) This means ruin! (*Suddenly to William, who is C.*) Do you hear? Ruin! I am ruined.

WILLIAM—Any more than usual, sir?

SHACK.—(*Crosses R.*)—It isn't the confounded money that's troubling me—

WILLIAM—It never *has*, sir.

SHACK—(*Goes up to fireplace*)—It's another affair *this time*!

WILLIAM—May I ask what other affair, sir?

SHACK.—Look here, William, you know all about my affairs, debts, duns, etc., and all the rest of it; but there's one thing you have never known!

WILLIAM—And that is, sir?

SHACK.—That I'm a married man!

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—He's done it, too. (*Aloud.*) You surprise me, sir. (*Points to letter.*) Your wife coming home sudden, sir?

SHACK.—That's it. I wish she would, but I haven't got a wife!

WILLIAM—Then she can't, can she?

SHACK.—Now, William, you know I've got an enormous respect for your powers of invention.

WILLIAM—Thank you, sir!

SHACK.—(*Sits on arm of chair in front of fireplace, and faces William, who is L. C. facing him*)—This is my position: An old aunt died some years ago, leaving me all her money, but with these conditions—that I was not to have any of it unless I married and settled down. Immediately on doing that, I was to have

£1,000 a year, and five years after marriage I was to inherit the principal. You understand?

WILLIAM—Yes, sir.

SHACK.—About three years ago, being frightfully in debt, I wrote to my trustee, a Mr. Kershaw, in Cornwall, who has never seen me since I was a boy, that I was about to be married, but couldn't do so until my debts were paid. He paid them (and an awful sum they were!) Then I wrote him immediately, and told him I was married—

WILLIAM—And weren't you?

SHACK.—Never!

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—He *ain't* done it. (*Aloud*)—Well, sir, what's the trouble now?

SHACK.—(*Comes C. a little*)—Ah! Now this is where a gifted liar, like you, will come in. As you know, I owe a heap of money, and am being dreadfully pressed.

WILLIAM—You are, sir.

SHACK.—Well, I wrote to Mr. Kershaw and told him that my wife's extravagance had run me frightfully into debt, and requested some more money to get me out of my difficulties!

WILLIAM—And won't he part, sir?

SHACK.—Yes, he will, but he's coming to town to-day, to lecture and remonstrate with my wife on her extravagance!

WILLIAM—Ha, ha!

SHACK.—Don't laugh like an idiot; don't you see, he'll find the whole thing out?

WILLIAM—Yes, I'm afraid you'll be locked up over this.

SHACK.—(*In astonished alarm*)—What! Think of something I'm to do. (*Goes down R.*)

WILLIAM—No good, sir! Facts, facts, that's what he'll want.

SHACK.—What do you mean?

WILLIAM—The wife, sir—she's the fact; and facts are stubborn things!

SHACK.—Exactly; you have come to the same conclusion as I. I must have a wife.

WILLIAM—(*Musing and looks abstracted*)—Yes, and I don't see where you are to get one between this and half-past ten. (*Looks at watch.*)

SHACK.—Oh, think of something, do! (*Goes up to fireplace.*)

WILLIAM—Well, let's see exactly how you stand, sir. You're over head and ears in debt? (*Ticking off on fingers.*)

SHACK.—I am.

WILLIAM—You're liable to be arrested at any moment?

SHACK.—True. (*Comes down R.*)

WILLIAM—You've been obtaining money from your trustee under false pretences?

SHACK.—(*Goes C.*)—I'm afraid so.

WILLIAM—You've presented yourself as a married man?

SHACK. Yes. (*Goes L.*)

WILLIAM—(*Ticking on fingers*)—Then you're a bit of a liar yourself, sir, ain't you?

SHACK.—(*Turns quickly*)—What?

WILLIAM—Only want to see *exactly* how you stand, sir!

SHACK—Well, what do you suggest? (*Sits on sofa, L.*)

WILLIAM—I think you're in for it, sir.

SHACK.—How?

WILLIAM—You *may* get out of the arrest for debt, but they're sure to run you in for the false pretences!

SHACK.—That's nice. (*Rises and crosses R.*) Can't you think of something?

WILLIAM—(*Musing*)—I can't think of anything. (*Suddenly brightens up.*) I've got it. Marry Miss Norton this morning.

SHACK.—(*Goes up R.*)—What rot! How can I do that?

WILLIAM—It's one way out of it. Hold hard, sir, here's another way. Ask Miss Norton to pretend to be your wife for twenty-four hours.

SHACK.—Good heavens, no! She would never do such a thing as that—(*Comes down R.*)

WILLIAM—Wouldn't she now? Some girls *are* so particular. What about her old aunt, Mrs. Chadwick, sir? She wouldn't mind.

SHACK.—Perhaps not. But *I* should.

WILLIAM—This isn't the time to pick and choose; you can't afford it, sir. Besides, from what I've seen of her, I think she's a little bit gone on you. You could easily marry her afterwards.

SHACK.—(*Coming to him*)—Look here, William, I've asked you to show me a way *out* of my troubles, not to lead me into greater ones.

WILLIAM—I think it would put matters right.

SHACK.—(*Goes a little R.*)—Oh! Fancy being tied to that old woman for life. (*Turns to William*)—Place yourself in my position. Now, if you were a married man—

WILLIAM—(*Starting*)—Eh?

SHACK—Which you are *not*.

WILLIAM—(*Relieved*)—Oh!

SHACK.—But suppose you *were*—(*Goes up R.*)—Would you not have chosen one about your own age—some one with good looks, neat figure, and all that sort of thing?

WILLIAM—(*Complacently*)—I think it's very likely I *should*, sir. Ha! ha! ha!

SHACK.—What are you laughing at?

WILLIAM—Nothing, sir. Only fancy *me* married, sir.  
Ha! ha!

SHACK.—Well, *it does* seem absurd, doesn't it?

WILLIAM—Oh, redikerlous, sir. Ha! ha! ha!

SHACK.—(Suddenly)—But come, let's think what's to be done.

WILLIAM—I can't think of anything more, sir, unless you borrow someone else's wife.

SHACK.—*That's not a bad idea*—(Slowly)—But it's an impossible one—(Comes C.)

WILLIAM—Indeed, sir.

SHACK—I *must* have a wife. Would anyone believe that in a civilized country—(Goes down L.)—in the 19th century, a man could be driven to distraction for the want of a little thing like that?

WILLIAM—(Takes Shackleton's hat, stick, and gloves off table R. Then goes up C.)—Yes, sir, absurd, ain't it? Some people 'as one, and don't want her, and you want one and can't get her! Ha! ha!

SHACK.—(Turns on William angrily)—Don't stand grinning there! (William turns to go C.) Can you or can you not suggest anything?

WILLIAM—(Suddenly and excitedly at door C.)—Yes, I've an idea!

SHACK.—Well?

WILLIAM—You *must* have a wife?

SHACK.—Yes!

WILLIAM—Go to Whiteley's! (Exits C. hurriedly.)

SHACK.—(Quietly)—I shall have to get rid of William. (Crosses R. and sits R. of table R.) Let me face the thing. (Reads letter)—"My dear Charles, I cannot say how pained—(of course he's pained)—I dare say that the money you want can be managed, but before making any such arrangements I must see your wife, place matters properly before her, and she must clearly be made to understand that she must reform and retrench. For this purpose I shall come to London tomorrow, and will come to you at once.—Yours sincerely—Michael Kershaw." Yes, there's no doubt about it—the crisis has come, and it must be met! (Leans on table R.) If I could but tide over the next four and twenty hours and produce a wife, the old gentleman would go back home perfectly satisfied, but where can I find one? How? (Head on his hand in thought.)

(CLAUDE enters.)

CLAUDE—(Announcing)—Miss Norton and Mrs. Chadwick.

MISS NORTON comes in C. eagerly, and is at back of table R. arrested by Shackleton's attitude of despair ; MRS. CHADWICK goes down L.)

LUCY—(As she enters)—Charley, dear—(stops). Why, what's the matter?

MRS. C.—(Down L.)—You don't seem overjoyed at seeing us.

SHACK.—(Rises very miserably and comes round to back of table R. to Lucy)—I never felt so delighted in my life ! How are you? . . . (Pause.) What do you want?

MRS. C.—Well, I never did !

LUCY—Why, Charley, have you forgotten that you promised to take us to the Academy to-day?

SHACK.—(Goes down R.—aside)—Oh, Lord ! (Aloud)—Forgotten ! Can you think that of me ?

MRS. C.—Well, here we are !

SHACK.—(Goes up to Lucy, absently)—Yes, here you are ! (Takes Lucy's hand solemnly. To Mrs C.) Good-bye. (Goes down R.)

BOTH—What ! !

SHACK.—No ! I beg your pardon, I mean—sit down ! (Mrs. C. sits on sofa L.)

LUCY—(Tearfully)—But aren't you going to take us there?

SHACK.—(Aside)—How can I get out of it ? (Aloud)—You see it's a half-crown day. (Goes up R. a little.) No, no, I don't mean that. (Wildly)—Ha ! ha ! (Down R. Lucy crosses to Mrs. C., who rises ; they stand in front of sofa.)

MRS. C.—(Rises)—Whatever is the matter with you ?

SHACK.—(With a sickly smile)—I'm all right.

MRS. C.—(To Lucy)—The life he's leading is beginning to tell on him ! (Coming to Shackleton, who is R. of table R., she is L. of table)—You know you ought to be married.

SHACK.—(Comes to her)—Yes ; that's just it—you're quite right—I ought to be, but I'm not. . . .

LUCY—(L.C. simply)—Why are you not, dear ?

MRS. C.—(R.C.)—Lucy, how can you be so forward ?

SHACK.—(R.)—Forward—nonsense ! (Crossing to C.) She's quite right !

MRS. C.—(R.)—Quite right ?

SHACK.—(C.)—Yes, she is, and I say to her, as she to me—(Solemnly)—Why are you not ?—(Goes up C.)

LUCY—(Aside)—How strange he is, Aunty !

MRS. C.—(Aside)—My dear, I'm afraid it's early drinking !

SHACK.—(Suddenly coming down C.)—I know—Lucy—why should we not be each other's, to-day—this hour—at once ! At any rate, before 10.30.

LUCY—(C.)—Charley—what is the matter—are you going to be ill?

SHACK.—*Ill? ill?* No—on the contrary—be mine this morning, and *all* will be *well!*—(*Goes down R.*)

LUCY—(*To Mrs. C.*)—Aunty, it's his brain. . . .

MRS. C.—Nonsense—his brain—(*Goes C. to her*)—no such thing.

SHACK.—(*To Lucy*)—Do you know anything about marriage licences? Can we get a licence at the Post Office?

MRS. C.—(*Crossing to Shack.*)—How dare you treat my niece in this way!

SHACK.—(*Absently*)—What way? (*Suddenly*)—Oh! Ah! I see what you mean—dogs—guns. . . .

LUCY—It's too bad! (*Goes up C.*) I shall go home! (*Mrs. C. goes L. by end of sofa. Shack. goes up R. to door C., stops Lucy and puts her in chair at writing table.*)

SHACK.—No, don't, we won't go to the Post Office—I've got a pal of mine close by, he's a splendid fellow, the Archbishop of Canterbury—I'll look him out in the book. (*Goes down to small table L. against flat and looks at Court Guide.*) You will marry me this morning? (*Extreme L.*)

LUCY—Charley dear, be calm—why this sudden . . .

SHACK.—(*Still preoccupied and looking through Court Guide*)—Will you marry me this morning? . . .

MRS. C.—(*Who is on Shackleton's R., simpering*)—Well, really . . .

SHACK.—(*Looks up from book*)—No—no—not you. (*Puts her aside as he crosses her and goes up C. to Lucy*)—Will you marry me this morning?

LUCY—(*Crosses down L. to Mrs. C. indignantly*)—Certainly not!

SHACK.—Then you don't love me. (*Comes down C.*)

LUCY—(C.)—Oh! How can you be so cruel!

SHACK.—(*Aside*)—Yes, I ought to be kicked, I know it—but—(*Aloud*)—You don't understand. (*Goes down R.*) Of course you wouldn't . . .

MRS. C.—(*Crossing to C.*)—Now, look here, Mr. Shackleton—

SHACK.—(*R. of table, speaks across it*)—Oh! Go home!

MRS. C.—Sir!

SHACK.—No, I don't mean that—

LUCY—Yes, you did, you want to be rid of us. (*Going. At door, half crying with vexation.*)

SHACK.—No, Lucy!—(*Goes up to her, Mrs. C. goes down L.*)

LUCY—Yes, you do! And I shall go at once, I'm ashamed of you! (*Exit C., slamming door.*)

SHACK.—(At C. door)—That's entirely owing to William. Done more harm than good *there*, I knew I should.—Confound William and his suggestions. (Comes down L. and puts *Court Guide* on table L. Goes extreme L. and peruses *Kershaw's letter*, which he has never put out of his hand.)

MRS. C.—(Aside)—I'll have an explanation from this young gentleman. (Aloud)—Mr. Shackleton. . . .

SHACK.—(Aside down L.)—Hullo! the old lady's still here! (Suddenly)—Another of William's ideas; I wonder if she would?

MRS. C.—Mr. Shackleton.

SHACK.—(Comes C. insinuatingly)—Call me Charley! It sounds nicer from you . . .

MRS. C.—Oh! the artful boy! He doesn't care for her after all. He has driven her away—Oh! can it be that?

SHACK.—(Comes to her R. insinuatingly, and touches her gently on arm)—Have you never thought of marrying again?

MRS. C.—(R. complacently.)—Often.

SHACK.—(R.)—Then why haven't you?

MRS. C.—(Coyly)—No one has asked me!

SHACK.—You surprise me—you'd make an excellent wife!

MRS. C.—I'm sure I should. (Turns to him romantically.)

SHACK.—(Earnestly)—Be mine.

MRS. C.—(Suddenly sinks in his arms, puts her head on his R. shoulder)—Oh, Charley.

SHACK.—For the next twenty-four hours.

MRS. C.—What? (Looking up at him.)

SHACK.—(Putting her head down again on his shoulder)—Lie still pretty one, lie still; only for four and twenty hours.

MRS. C.—(Releases herself)—Sir, never!

SHACK.—(Crosses L.)—Well, perhaps you're right. We shouldn't get on together. (Goes up C.)

MRS. C.—(In a passion. Comes C.)—You disgraceful young man. (Angry)—How you could have dared . . .

SHACK.—(Coolly)—Yes, looking at it calmly I wonder how I (Comes down R.C.) could have dared, even for four and twenty hours.

MRS. C.—(Crosses L. as he comes R.C. Aside)—Is he mad or tipsy, or what is he?

SHACK.—(Crosses to her)—You don't know the trouble I'm in. I shall have to disappear . . . (Takes her hand earnestly.)

MRS. C.—Disappear!

SHACK.—For a time, till all has blown over, but don't you worry; tell Lucy (Crosses R.) I disappeared thinking of her. Good-bye, I'm off. . . .

(Exits hurriedly R.D.)\*

\* NOTE.—Shackleton has only three minutes for change of clothes

MRS. C.—There is something radically wrong ; if I could but help him, have some claim upon his gratitude, I might yet be mistress of his heart and home. (Turns.)

(Enter WILLIAM C., he arranges mat at door C.)

Oh ! Good-morning, William.

WILLIAM—Good-morning, ma'am. (Crosses at back and goes to door R.)

MRS. C.—(Aside, crosses C.)—I might get something out of him. (Aloud)—There seem to be nice goings-on in this house.

WILLIAM—(Nervously)—Lor, mum, what do you mean ? (Advancing in front of table towards C.)

MRS. C.—Your master appears very strange in his manner ?

WILLIAM—(Relieved)—I'm afraid he do, mum !

MRS. C.—(Comes nearer to him)—Now, William, tell me, what is it all about ?

WILLIAM—No, I durstn't, mum !

MRS. C.—I would do anything to help him ! (Gives William half a sovereign.)

WILLIAM—(Looks at it, puts it quickly in his pocket)—Would you, mum ; would you ? Look here, mum—he is in trouble, because he's passed himself off as a married man, and he's got to prove it !

MRS. C.—To whom ?

WILLIAM—To Mr. Kershaw, his trustee, who's coming to town to-day. If he don't prove it, he'll have to refund all the money he's received, and very likely stand a chance of losing what's to come to him.

MRS. C.—What's to be done ?

WILLIAM—Couldn't you get your niece to say she's his wife ?

MRS. C.—Certainly not ! (Goes L. William follows her up a little.)

WILLIAM—(A little imploringly)—It will only be for four and twenty hours. The old gentleman goes home to-morrow, perhaps to-night !

MRS. C.—(Turns)—But your master is going away. . . .

WILLIAM—(Astonished)—Is he, mum ?

MRS. C.—He told me so just now—till all has blown over, he said. (William goes up R.C. a little. Aside)—Why should not I undertake it ? Four and twenty hours of pretence might make me his in reality for life. Oh, bliss !

WILLIAM—Beg pardon, mum !

MRS. C.—(Aside)—I will ! (Aloud—Goes up C.)—Tell your master I'll be back soon—that he is not to worry himself, for he is saved.

WILLIAM—I'll mention it to him, mum.

(Exit MRS. CHADWICK C.)

WILLIAM—Oh ! So he's saved, is he ?

(Enter JANE L. Comes C.)

Shall I break the news to him now, or—(Hugs Jane)—  
My darling !

JANE—(Reprovingly)—Be careful, William !

WILLIAM—Why should I ?

JANE—(Reprovingly)—You keep rumpling anybody so.

WILLIAM—What of it—you're mine, ain't you ?

JANE—(A little irritated)—Yes, but we don't want everybody to know it.

WILLIAM—(Getting cross)—Oh, let 'em know it--I don't care !

JANE—(Severely)—William !

WILLIAM (Angrily)—Jane !

JANE—Are you going to begin so soon ?

WILLIAM—What do you mean ?

JANE—Do you wish to break my heart on this our wedding morn ?

WILLIAM—No, ducky, not if I can help it.

JANE—(Tearfully)—But you will do so, if you don't take care !

WILLIAM—Good gracious ! How ?

JANE—If master knew that we was married he'd be glad of the excuse to send us away without our wages, and that—ah ! Yes—that would break my heart ! (Sobs a little on his breast.)

WILLIAM—(Soothingly pats her head)—You're too sensitive !

JANE—(Sentimentally looking up at him)—Think of our milk-walk, darling !

WILLIAM—I do ! But I can't be always thinking of it !

JANE—You must ! It is all we have to live for ? (Goes L.)

WILLIAM—(With emotion)—Don't say that, Jane. Surely there's other things in the world besides milk-walks.

JANE—(Earnestly)—Not for me—no, not for us ! It must be our constant thought by day, the subject of our dreams by night. Waking or sleeping it must gnaw our very heart-strings !

WILLIAM—(Meekly)—Oh, very well, Jane !

JANE—Now, go, William ! (William goes up C.) We shall be bound by a closer tie than that of love—a milk-walk ! So, William, be brave—remember, this is our wedding day ! (Crosses R.)

WILLIAM—(Dejectedly at door C.)—It is, and I never felt so damned miserable in all my life !

(Exit C.)

JANE—(Crosses and sits on sofa and looks at newspaper)—  
Ha ! ha ! ha ! Poor fellow, that's the only way with him ! If he were left to himself he'd let the whole thing go ! But that won't do for you, Jane.

(Enter SHACKLETON R.D. Jane rises quickly, crumples up and puts newspaper down and goes up L. a little. He watches her, he has umbrella, tall hat in his hand; in the hat he has flower and clean handkerchief. He is faultlessly dressed, frock coat, &c.)

SHACK.—You are very busy!

JANE—Ye—no, sir! I'm not doing much . . . .

SHACK.—So I should say. (Puts umbrella and hat on table R.) See if you can't find something to do.

JANE—(Resumes dusting)—Yes, sir! (Goes up L. Takes clothes brush off sideboard.)

SHACK.—(Aside, goes up C.)—It's no use! I can't stand it. (Jane crosses at back and comes down R. of table R.) There's only one thing to do. I must bolt! (Comes down C.) I must fly the country, and immediately! I go, an alien, and an outcast! (Jane turns hat over and empties flower and handkerchief on to table.) (Aside.) A fugitive from justice! (Jane gives him his hat.) (Aside as he puts hat on)—Without a shelter for my head!—(to Jane)—Umbrella, Jane! (Jane gives him umbrella.)—Thank you, Jane (leans on umbrella, aside), reckless, careless, negligent! (Jane brushes Shackleton.)—Thank you, Jane. (Aside.) I have sunk so low that I leave without a pang—without a tear! (Jane gives him his handkerchief and goes to his left to put flower in his button-hole.) I leave my native land, unwept, unhonoured, uncomfortable. (His eye falls on Jane, who is putting a flower in his button-hole, L. Aloud.)—Unmarried!

JANE—(Starting back a little)—Sir?

SHACK.—What's the matter?

JANE—(Confusedly)—I thought you were referring to me, sir?

SHACK.—No; I was speaking principally about myself for the moment.

JANE—You quite startled me!

SHACK.—Does the idea of marriage startle you? Ah! you'll be married some day, I suppose.

JANE—I shouldn't wonder, sir!

SHACK.—You're sure to, a good-looking girl like you (in an absent-minded way he puts his arm round her waist) could not remain single for long. . . .

JANE—Really, sir, you mustn't.

SHACK.—He will be a happy man who will some day call you his—

JANE—I hope he'll do more than call me his, sir.

SHACK.—I hope so! (Flourishes umbrella.) A man would be a scoundrel who would—(stops umbrella in the air

*goes down R.*)—and yet I wanted to do the very same thing myself this morning!

JANE—Do what, sir?

SHACK.—Call a lady my wife when she wasn't!

JANE—(*L.C.*) Good gracious, what for?

SHACK.—For family reasons. (*Comes to her.*) You see, Jane, Mr. Kershaw, my trustee, is coming to-day, and he thinks I'm married—and when he finds I'm not, I shall be ruined, broke, absolutely stoney! (*Turns away R.*)

JANE—(*Reflectively*)—How annoying! (*Suddenly*)—How about our wages?

SHACK.—(*Turns to her*) Ah!—That's what's worrying me!

SHACK.—(*Goes down R.*)—If she had only consented all would have been well, but it was not to be!

JANE—(*Follows him up*)—If who had consented, sir?

SHACK.—Mrs. Chadwick!

JANE—(*With sympathy goes C.*)—I never did like that woman.

SHACK.—If I had asked her to be *really* my wife one could have understood it—but to pretend that's all I asked.

JANE—It's perfectly ridiculous! Haven't you tried anyone else, sir? (*Crosses to sofa L. and folds newspaper up.*)

SHACK.—(*Extreme R.*)—I can't think of anyone else—I know no one who would. (*Suddenly, brightening up—goes to her.*) By Jingo! Would you?

JANE—(*Quietly*)—Would I what, sir?

SHACK.—Pretend to be my wife for a few hours. (*Jane screams. He catches her in his arms quickly to quiet her.*) Hush! it's all right. I'd make it worth your while. I owe you money now, but it will enable me to pay up, and I'll give you fifty—a hundred pounds besides.

JANE—Oh, I couldn't, sir!

SHACK.—You're not engaged to be married, are you? (*Turns away R.*)

JANE—No, I am (*SHACK. turns to her quickly*) not engaged to be married.

SHACK.—That's all right. Then I shan't have anybody's jealousy to fear. (*Goes down R.*)

JANE—(*Aside. Goes L.*)—Except William's, perhaps; but what's that to a hundred pounds and arrears of wages—I'll do it. (*Comes C.*) I'll do it.

SHACK.—(*Comes to her and attempts to embrace her*)—Darling!

JANE—(*Puts her hand up and stops him*)—Wait a minute, let's understand each other. All that sort of thing is only to be before other people?

SHACK.—Quite so ; but we *must* have a little practice !

JANE—Oh, no ; it will come naturally to me. (Goes *L.*, then comes *C.*)

SHACK.—Oh, that's all right ! (Goes *R.*, then comes *C.*)

Now, what's the first thing to do ? You'll want some dresses, and all that sort of thing. Mr. Kershaw believes my wife to be a most extravagant sort of person.

JANE—Oh, you shan't complain !

SHACK.—(*Satirically*)—Thanks !

JANE—Oh, yes. We must do the thing well while we're about it.

SHACK.—Who will you go to ? Cressey and Portier, Kate Riley, Peter Robinson, Swan and Edgar, Russell and Allen.

JANE—(*Enthusiastically*)—Oh, to all the lot of them !

SHACK.—(*Sarcastically*)—You *are* entering into the *spirit* of the thing !

JANE—Where extravagance in dress is concerned we must have no *half* measures !

SHACK.—Certainly not.

JANE—I suppose they will give you credit ?

SHACK.—Sure to, if the order is big enough !

JANE—I shall want some jewellery.

SHACK.—Of course ; after that meet me at Henry Lewis', in Bond Street.

JANE—Now, how are we to behave—(*Sits on sofa L. and puts off Jane, assuming his equal.*) In the first place, how long have we been married ?

SHACK.—(*Looking a little surprised at her coolness*)—Three years.

JANE—Then we'd better have a quarrel or two, it will give colour to the thing.

SHACK.—Very well !

JANE—And you must "snap me up," and contradict me, and complain of everything.

SHACK.—(*Coming towards her*)—Is all that quite necessary ?

JANE—Yes, we've been married three years. Then we must make friends again.

SHACK.—(*Sits beside her, on R. arm of sofa L.*)—And spoon—?

JANE—Perhaps ! And I'll call you Charley—

SHACK.—(*A little startled*)—Eh ? Is that necessary ?

JANE—Of course it is, Charley ; and you must do the same to me.

SHACK.—(*Absently*)—What, call you Charley ?

JANE—No, Jane ! No, after all I think Jenny would be better !

SHACK.—(*Aside, rising and going R.*)—This is nice !

JANE—Do you hear, Charley?

SHACK.—(Turns)—Yes, Jane. (*A little despondently.*)  
JANE—(*Rises and comes C.—with severity*)—What did I tell you?

SHACK.—(*As before*)—I beg pardon, Jenny.

JANE—(*Sarcastically*)—Oh! You are entering into the spirit of the thing!

SHACK.—I'm trying, I'm trying!

JANE—Yes, you are, very! I shall throw it all up if you don't do what I tell you better than this!

SHACK.—(*Aside*)—Well, here goes for the plunge! (*Aloud*)—My darling Jenny, I must kiss you! (*Goes to her to do so.*)

JANE—Ah! That's better—but not now. (*Goes L.*) I think, perhaps, if at some time I sobbed on your breast it would be very effective. How are we for height? (*Beckons to him, he comes to her; they stand close together L. C.*) I think you'll have to sit down while I sob on your breast. (*Shack. goes R. a little. Jane goes L. a little.*) Now I'll be off. (*Goes C.*) I'll be at the jeweller's as soon as possible. Meet me there, and I'll select what I want—leave *that* part of it *also to me*.

SHACK.—(*Going up to her*)—What an excellent wife you would make!

JANE—(*Pertly*)—Think so?

SHACK.—(*Taking her hand*)—It never struck me.

JANE—(*Snatching it away and doubling fist*)—It will if you're not careful. (*Goes up a little.*)

SHACK.—(*Getting away R.*)—Look here, hang it all, you know; don't speak to me like that. Let's have a little flirting.

JANE—No, I'm your wife. . . . (*Coming down a little C.*) “To oblige on this occasion only.” . . . And if you commence any nonsense all will be over between us.

SHACK.—Yes, but still . . . (*Crosses C.*)

JANE—This is quite a matter of business with me. You wish to pass me off as your wife—I consent—business! We quarrel—business! We make it up—business! You then hold me sobbing to your heart—I murmur gentle words of reproach, you frantically kiss away my tears, we are clasped in each other's arms—business! How do you like that?

SHACK.—I think it's damn funny.

JANE—(*Goes L. a little*)—That's all right. Now I'm going to—(*Going up towards C. door again*)—put on my things and creep out of the house! When we meet in this room again—(*without the slightest emotion*)—we shall be all the world to each other.

SHACK.—(Goes up to her, quietly)—Ducky!—(Both at door C.)

JANE—Quite so—good-bye—my own Charley!—(Chucks him under the chin. Shack. makes a movement as if to kiss her. Jane puts hand up to stop him)—Business!!  
(Exit C.)

SHACK.—It's done, I'm out of my difficulties! (Comes down L.) I wonder whether I'm right in giving myself away like this? But what else can I do? As long as I get out of this trouble everything will come right. (Takes cigarette out of box on small table L.) Now, the old man will be here soon, so I'll get out before he comes and return with my bride. (Crosses to table R., takes up fancy match-stand about to strike match.)

MRS. C.—(Heard off)—Where is your master?

SHACK.—It's the old girl.

(Enter CLAUDE C. Shows on MRS. CHADWICK.)

Another reason why I should get out!

(Mrs. C. comes on quickly, throwing her arms round Shackleton's neck from behind which bends him down suddenly and he bangs match-box on table.)

MRS. C.—Charles, you are saved!

SHACK.—That's as well to know. (Tries to remove her arms.)

MRS. C.—I have arranged it all.

SHACK.—To save me?

MRS. C.—Yes.

SHACK.—(Going down R.)—It's very nice of you, but I've a most particular appointment.

MRS. C.—You don't know what I mean.

SHACK.—No, do you?

MRS. C.—Listen!

SHACK.—(Goes up C.)—I can't! (Mrs. C. clings to his coat tail as he passes her.) I really must request you to leave go!

MRS. C.—Never!

SHACK.—Confound! (Shakes his coat tail out of her hand, releases himself, and rushes up C. Catches hold of Claude, who has been gazing open-mouthed at the scene, but now is making haste to escape, flings him down L., kicking him, and rushes off C.)

CLAUDE—Ow—w—w—!

MRS. C.—(On chair R. of table R. crying)—Oh, oh! This is dreadful!

CLAUDE—(Rubbing himself and going up slowly towards door)—Oh, it's somethink awful!

MRS. C.—This is a cruel blow.

CLAUDE—It was a shockin' blow.

MRS. C.—I'm not speaking to you, sir ; mind your own business !

CLAUDE—(At door C.—rubbing himself and limping)—I am minding it !

(Slowly exits C., limping.)

MRS. C.—Oh, Charles, to spurn me like this. (Rises.) But you shall not break my heart. (Crosses C.)—I'll help you in spite of yourself, and if I do not win you (goes down L.) it shall not be for want of trying !

(Enter WILLIAM very miserably.)

WILLIAM—Jane ! (Sees Mrs. C.)—I beg your pardon, mum ! (Goes to door R. and calls—Mrs. C. comes C., looking at him)—Jane ! Where are you ? (Goes to L. door and calls)—Jane ! She's gone out ! There's something going on ! She's hiding something from me !

MRS. C.—What's the matter with you ?

WILLIAM—(Coming C.)—Me, mum ? Nothing ! (Wildly)—Ha, ha ! Jane ! (Crosses R.)

MRS. C.—(on sofa L.)—Oh, bother, Jane ! You've nothing to do with her !

WILLIAM—Oh, ain't I ? Think not ?

MRS. C.—Now, listen to me. Did you give your master my message ?

WILLIAM—No, I hadn't a chance, mum !

MRS. C.—That accounts for his behaviour, then. Now, William, I mean to carry out your suggestion, and lead Mr. Kershaw to believe that I am Mrs. Shackleton !

WILLIAM—Oh, I hope you'll succeed, mum !

MRS. C.—Why shouldn't I ?

WILLIAM—Well, there's a little difference in your ages, mum ! But he's an old gentleman, and very likely near-sighted, so perhaps it'll be all right.

MRS. C.—(Rising, with dignity)—Don't be personal, William.

WILLIAM—No, mum !

MRS. C.—(Goes a little to him)—You'll help me, William ?

WILLIAM—I'll do my best, mum ! (Aside)—She's better than nothing at all !

MRS. C.—Your master rushed out just now in a state of violent agitation !

WILLIAM—Yes, I expect he's afraid to meet the old gentleman.

MRS. C.—That's it ! He's gone ! This makes it easier for us ; see how grateful he will be to both of us for having arranged it in his absence ?

WILLIAM (*Aside, goes down R.*)—It's peculiar—both away at the same time—her treatment of me this morning—oh lor ! (*Leans on chair R. of table.*)

MRS. C.—What is the matter with you ?

WILLIAM—Nothing at all, mum—(*wipes forehead*)—I'm in a cold perspiration !

MRS. C.—Now it is all arranged. What time will Mr. Kershaw be here ?

(*Bell ready.*)

(*William goes up R. and looks at clock on mantelpiece.*)

WILLIAM—He's about due now, mum !

MRS. C.—Then you'd better show me somewhere, where I can leave my bonnet and prepare myself to receive him.

WILLIAM—Yes, mum. (*Going down R. and opening door R.*) As master's out you'd better go in his room.

MRS. C.—(*Cross R. to R. door.*)—This is a terrible step I am taking—but what will not a woman do for the man she—(*sighs*). Oh, William !

(*Exits R.*)

WILLIAM—(*At door*)—Loves, I s'pose, she means ? (*Comes R. and sits R. of table despondently.*) It depends on who the woman *is*. Jane says she loves me—and she's nearly drove me raving mad. (*Bell rings.*) Oh, here's Mr. Kershaw, I expect. (*Rises*) Now for it. I don't know how all this is going to end, but it strikes me we're going to have some *larks* !

*Claude shows on MR. KERSHAW C. Mr. Kershaw enters with coat on arm, hat, stick, &c.; he is rather near-sighted and wears spectacles.*

KERSHAW—(*Rushing to William R.C. by table R.*)—Ah ! my dear boy ; how are you, how are you ?—(*Shakes hands effusively.*)

WILLIAM—Only so, so—Thank you, sir—(*aside*)—What a affable old gentleman !

KER.—How you've grown !

WILLIAM—Since when ?

KER.—Since I saw you last—since you were a boy !

WILLIAM—Yes, I *have* grown since I was a boy, but I've never seen you before, sir !

KER.—Never seen me before, Charley ?

WILLIAM—I *ain't* Charley, sir !

KER.—Not Ch—— Who the dickens are you, then ?

WILLIAM—I'm his man, sir !

KER.—(*Throws him coat, stick, &c.*)—Confound you—why didn't you say so before ?

WILLIAM—Didn't give me time, sir.

KER.—Well, where's your master ?

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—I wonder where he is! He *must* have bolted! Well, here goes! (*Aloud*.) He desired me to say that he was suddenly called away on most important business, but I was to ask you to sit down, and he'll be back in a few hours.

KER.—(*Sits on sofa, L.*)—That's *very* satisfactory. And where's his wife?

WILLIAM—Oh! We've got *her* right enough—

KER.—Eh?

WILLIAM—I mean she'll be down in a minute!

KER.—Oh, come, that's something!

WILLIAM—Oh, it's everything!

KER.—What?

WILLIAM—Will you take some refreshment, sir?

KER.—No, I'll wait till your master comes home.

WILLIAM—(*R. Aside*)—Poor old chap! if he waits till then he'll be feeling a little *faint*. (*Goes up. Aloud*.)—Sure, I can't get you a drop of something, sir?

KER.—No, I tell you!

WILLIAM—(*Goes up towards door and turns*.)—You've never seen Mrs. Shackleton, I think, sir?

KER.—I have not.

WILLIAM—You'd *better* have a little drop of something, sir!

(*Kershaw turns to him. WILLIAM exits C. quickly.*)

KER.—What does he mean by that? Ought I to nerve myself for the interview? Charley tells me she is extravagant—wasteful. But is she anything else? She may fly at me. Upon my word, I am beginning to feel quite nervous. Why on earth did the boy go out? But perhaps it's as well; I can speak to her alone, and remonstrate with her. It will be much better—much better. (*Looks at newspaper.*)

(*Enter MRS. CHADWICK without bonnet, etc., R.*)

MRS. C.—He is there! (*Goes up R. as if to go.*) Oh, dear! I almost wish I (*stops and then comes C.*)—but courage! Hem!

KER.—(*Rising*) I beg your pardon, madam.

MRS. C.—Mr. Kershaw, I think?

KER.—The same!

MRS. C.—Be seated. (*Mrs. C. seats herself on sofa. Up stage.*)

KER.—(*Aside*)—Seems a nice old girl. Wife's mother—I suppose (*aloud*) you are related to Mr. Shackleton, I presume. (*Sits on sofa L. Down stage.*)

MRS. C.—I—er—yes!

KER.—(*Aside*)—I thought so! (*playfully*), I am afraid I shall have to be very angry with your daughter!

MRS. C.—My daughter!

KER.—There, there, don’t be alarmed. I daresay I can put things right, but she’s a sad little puss, isn’t she?

MRS. C.—(Feebly)—I—I don’t know.

KER.—But I daresay she’s very fond of him.

MRS. C.—Who is?

KER.—Your daughter.

MRS. C.—Fond of whom?

KER.—Charley.

MRS. C.—(Faintly)—I haven’t a daughter.

KER.—I beg pardon. (Turns away L.) A tender subject. (Turns to her)—Your grand-daughter, probably!

MRS. C.—Sir!

KER.—(Aside)—There’s something wrong. (Rises. Aloud. bending well forward)—Did I not understand you to say that you were a relation of Charley’s?

MRS. C.—I did say so.

KER.—(Alarmed)—Then *what* relation, pray?

MRS. C.—(Simpering)—I am his wife.

KER.—(Falling back on sofa)—Heavens and earth—(business of being overcome)—Charley’s man was right, I should have taken a little something. (Aloud)—Well, this is the biggest staggerer I have ever had in my life. No offence to *you*, you know.

MRS. C.—(Frigidly)—Quite so.

KER.—But really it is too absurd to marry a lady of your age. I beg you will acquit me of any wish to be rude . . .

MRS. C.—Oh, certainly.

KER.—But there must have been *something* about you to captivate a man like Charles Shackleton, though where it is goodness knows! I don’t intend this unkindly.

MRS. C.—Oh, no!

KER.—Perhaps you were a beauty when you were younger—you perceive I possess a certain amount of delicacy. . . .

MRS. C.—Any one could perceive that.

KER.—Just so.

MRS. C.—Certainly. { Awkwardly.

KER.—Of course.

(Pause.)

Now I think we’d better change the subject.

MRS. C.—If you wouldn’t mind.

KER.—Now, with regard to your extravagance, you’re simply ruining that boy.

MRS. C.—(Half in tears)—Am I?

KER.—You know you are. Now, you know it won’t do. If you were a young and giddy girl, which you are not, you admit that?

MRS. C.—I admit that.

KER.—There might be some excuse for you : but what do you want with showy dresses, jewellery, plays, parties, at homes, and things, at your time of life ?

MRS. C.—(*Reduced to absolute misery*)—What, indeed ?

KER.—(*Taking her hand*)—Come, now, you speak like a sensible old lady. There's time, even for *you*, to pull up. (*Sentimentally*)—I may have appeared harsh to you.

MRS. C.—Not at all.

KER.—I hope not, I hope not—but I *may*—but let's say no more about it.

MRS. C.—I have not said *anything* about it yet.

KER.—(*Rises*)—You have not, and it shows your common sense. But I'll never say another word to hurt you— I'll just see Charley and tell him what an ass I think he must have been to marry such a—but there, that's going back to the old subject. (*Crosses C.*) I think we understand each other, we are friends, eh ?— (*shakes hands with her*).

SHACK.—(*Heard off*)—Oh, is he there ?

MRS. C.—(*Rises quickly and crosses R.*)—There he is— (*aloud*)—oh ! I must leave you for a little while !— (*aside*)—oh, Charles, what I have suffered in trying to win you !

(*Exit R. Enter SHACK. C.*)

SHACK.—(*C.*)—Ah, my dear old guardian, I am delighted to see you ! You are Mr. Kershaw, are you not ?

KER.—(*R. C.*)—I am, sir.

SHACK.—You are looking well.

KER.—So are you, my boy.

SHACK.—Why shouldn't I ? Have I not everything in the world to make me happy ? A good home, plenty of money, and (except for her extravagance) a wife whom any man would adore.

KER.—(*Dubiously*)—Some men.

SHACK.—Any man ! At any rate, I adore her. (*Goes L.*)

KER.—Then it doesn't matter to anybody else, does it ?

SHACK.—(*Comes C.*)—Not a bit. I can tell you, sir, I am the most envied man in England, possessing, as I do, a wife who is both young and beautiful. (*Goes L.*)

KER.—Is she, though ? (*Shack. comes C.*)

SHACK.—You can easily imagine that for her sake—not for mine, so much—we get many invitations from some of the smartest people in London—which, of course, we have to return, you know ; and it costs money, you know ; and she is extravagant in other ways, you know ; and—er—and that costs money. Then there are other things, and they cost money. (*Sits on sofa L.*)

KER.—But I suppose society won't run after her *much longer*?

SHACK.—Why?

KER.—I should think another—well—another year will see the end of *her* popularity.

SHACK.—Bless you, she isn't in her prime!

KER.—You are quite right. She is *not*.

SHACK.—Ha! ha! you speak as if you had already seen her. (Rises.)

KER.—So I have.

SHACK.—(*In astonishment*)—You've—oh no—she's been out shopping with me all the morning.

KER.—Not *all* the morning—(*Goes down L.*)—I tell you I've seen her—(*Shack. goes up to fireplace and rings bell*)—and rated her soundly, and I am bound to say she's a very sensible old lady?

SHACK.—*Old* lady. Why, she isn't five-and-twenty! There's some frightful mistake somewhere.

(Enter WILLIAM C.)

Has any one called?

WILLIAM—No, sir.

KER.—Did I not see and speak to Mrs. Shackleton just now?

WILLIAM—(*Winking at Shack.*)—Of course you did, sir. (*Aside to Shack. as Ker. goes L. rubbing his hands with satisfaction at being right*)—It's all right, sir, I've arranged it.

SHACK.—(*In despair*)—Have you? So have I. (Comes down R. C.)

WILLIAM—Oh, Lor!

KER.—(*Comes C. a little*)—Where's your mistress?

WILLIAM—My which, sir?

(Enter MRS. CHADWICK R. comes to R. of table R. Music.)

MRS. C. (*Lovingly to Shack.*)—Ah, Charley dear, back at last!

KER.—There you are—there's your wife (Goes L.)

SHACK.—(*Looking blankly at Mrs. C. and pointing to her*)—Nothing of the sort, this is a hideous mistake!

WILLIAM—(*Aside to Shack.*)—Don't give it away, sir!

MRS. C.—(*Across table aside to Shack.*)—We've arranged it all beautifully between us.

SHACK.—Be quiet, woman, you are *not* my wife! (Mrs. C. shrieks and faints in chair R. of table R.)

KER.—Not your wife!

SHACK.—No!

(*William is doubled up with laughter at the situation L.C. behind settee, so as not to mask door.*)

KER.—(Coming a little forward)—Then you haven't got a wife, you rascal!

(William is still convulsed.)

(Enter JANE C. handsomely dressed as Mrs. Shackleton, followed by CLAUDE. William sees Jane and is transfixed with astonishment at back.)

SHACK.—Yes, I have. (Meets Jane, takes her hand, brings her down C.) This is my wife!

JANE bows to KERSHAW. SHACK. looks delighted. WILLIAM gives an unearthly groan and falls senseless.

CLAUDE runs and catches him.

CLAUDE.

WILLIAM.

SHACK. and JANE.

MRS. C.

KERSHAW.

QUICK CURTAIN.

SECOND PICTURE.

WILLIAM.  
CLAUDE.

Back to back.  
Claude drinking  
out of decanter.

MRS. C.

in chair R.  
of table R.

SHACKLETON.

JANE and KERSHAW.

C.  
Shaking hands.

## ACT II.

SCENE—Same as Act I.

*Table arranged C. for lunch, for three persons, &c. Music to take Curtain up.*

WILLIAM discovered brooding in chair R. of table C., with table knife in hand, very pale and haggard, CLADUE places claret jug on table and, admiring effect, stands L. of table C.

CLAUDE—There! Ain’t it lovely! Upon my word I seem to take a extra pride in the place now I know master’s married.

(Comes down to front of table.)

Don’t you, William? (William groans.) Oh, what’s the good of carrying on? She was too good for us. William. She was born to look down on sich as you and me. But it’s a wonderful world, ain’t it? If master hadn’t married her it would have been quite a toss up which of us she’d have had. (Turns and finds William passing knife across his throat. Claude takes knife away from him and puts it on table.) Don’t, William, I’ve just cleaned that knife. (Goes up L.) Be calm like I am. (Turns L.C.) I’ve lost her. (William rises, takes knife off table and runs up after him. Behind table—Claude rushes up to C. door, crying out) Help! (Exit C. hurriedly.)

WILLIAM—(Tragically comes C.)—I believe I’m being worked up to commit the most frightful crimes! And that boy shall be the first to go! He’ll be good practice for me. Oh, is this to be the end of our married life? (Comes down R. to table and puts knife back.) Hang it, the end has come before the beginning. Again, all the suspicion that I used to have about master before I was married comes up before me. She was some time in the situation before I came—that kiss he gave her—Oh! lor. And yet why has she married me? I must find out whether I am to consider myself a married man at once. (Is in front of table.)

(Enter JANE C., dressed as at end of Act I., except hat.)

JANE—William!

WILLIAM—Well, Jane? (Without turning round.)

JANE—How dare you address me in that way, sir? (Comes down L.)—Remember that I am your mistress.

WILLIAM—Oh! I thought you was my—

JANE—William!

WILLIAM—(*Pathetically*)—Well, you are, ain't you? We was married this morning, wasn't we? If not, dispel the illusion before it becomes a settled conviction with me.

JANE—Of course we were, stupid, but I've made arrangements with master.

WILLIAM—Oh! (*In horror.*)

JANE—Hold your tongue! You know he's got to produce a wife to Mr. Kershaw—well, I am his wife.—(*Slight stagger of William*)—for a few hours—don't you see?

WILLIAM—(*Recovers himself quickly, as if seeing it all, and comes to her a little*)—Oh, then this is only a little game of yours all the time?

JANE—Of course, stupid!

WILLIAM—I see! But why didn't you let me know?

JANE—I hadn't an opportunity—(*Sits on sofa L.*)

WILLIAM—(*Coming to her*)—But what are we going to get out of it?

JANE—*When* he gets out of it, we'll stand in *what* he gets out of it.

WILLIAM—Suppose the governor was really to get fond of you?

JANE—(*Musing*)—That's possible.

WILLIAM—I should have to stand by and look on all the time.

JANE—No, you wouldn't.

WILLIAM—What do you suppose I should do, then?

JANE—(*Looks up at him*)—Nothing! I should send you out of the room.

WILLIAM—*Would* you, by jingo!

JANE—Oh, don't worry about it, it's all right; it's all for the sake of our milk-walk that's as good as bought, for I'm to have £100. These dresses and jewels, too, will be worth something. He'd never think of taking them back after it's all over.

WILLIAM—But does it seem quite respectable, Jane?

JANE—Don't worry, I tell you. Why can't you trust me? In the meantime, remember I love you. (*Gushingly. Then altering her tone.*) And now—(*languidly putting her feet upon sofa*)—William, bring me a glass of sherry.

WILLIAM—Well, this fairly takes the—(*Goes to table C. and pours out two glasses of sherry.*)

JANE—How easy it is to be the lady when you've got 'em all on. Do you hear me, William?

WILLIAM—(*Amused*)—Oh, certainly, mum.

JANE—If I don't have my picture took in this frock, my name ain't Jane. (*William hands sherry, she tastes it.*) H'm; not very dry. I must have some better than this.

WILLIAM—Oh, I've always found it right enough. (*Tosses a glass off quickly.*)

JANE—William, now, once for all, drop it. Do you hear?

WILLIAM—Shan't.

(*Shackleton's voice heard off C.*)

SHACK.—Come along, Mr. Kershaw.

(*William hurriedly goes to sideboard and puts down glasses.*)

(*Jane rises with dignity as Shack. and Kershaw enter C.*)

JANE—William, you will leave at the end of your month. (*She crosses from L. to R. with very grand airs as they come down.*)

(Enter CLAUDE C., with fish in entrée dish, plates and sauce tureen on butler's tray, puts it on trestle beside sideboard L.)

SHACK.—(*Laughing*)—What's he been doing, my love?

(*William comes down, puts two clean sherry glasses on table.*)

JANE—(*Waving them to their seats—sits R. of table C.*)—We won't discuss it now. It will not be very entertaining to Mr. Kershaw, darling.

(*Shack. sits C. of table facing audience.*)

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—I'll love and darling them, presently.

KER.—On the contrary, my dear madam—it's most interesting to learn that London servants are as great a curse as those in the country. (*To William, who is handing him a chair L. of table*)—I hope you'll understand that I've no wish to hurt your feelings. (*Sits L. of table.*)

WILLIAM—(*In suppressed rage*)—Certainly, sir! (*Goes up to sideboard and gets plates.*)

JANE—I don't know where to get a really good servant now-a-days. They all want to marry above their station.

(*William comes down with plates to R. of Kershaw, whose hands are on the table; William, while bringing them down, handles plates as if they were very hot.*)

KER.—But still I think London servants are not so careless as—(*William, gazing at Jane with astonishment, puts hot plate on Kershaw's hands.*)

Oh! (*Bus.*)

JANE—I must apologise for him, Mr. Kershaw. (*William gives plate to Shackleton and Jane.*) He's a good fellow enough, but he is *so stupid*.

SHACK.—Yes, William is a bit of an ass, you know.

CLAUDE—(*At back*)—Ha! ha! ha!

(*William threatens him, he subsides and exits C. William fetches fish.*)

JANE—Will you take a little sherry, Mr. Kershaw? (*Kershaw helps himself and puts decanter over to Jane.*) I can recommend it.

SHACK.—(*Slyly*)—Have you tried it, dear?

JANE—(*Taking decanter and helping herself*)—Often!—  
(*Shackleton laughs.*)

(*William hands fish to Kershaw L. of him.*)

KER.—Oh, by the way, don't forget that you promised to tell me about that eccentric old lady who said she was your wife.

SHACK.—(*Aside, as William goes round and hands fish to Jane*)—I knew he'd ask some deuced awkward questions. (*Aloud*)—Oh, I suppose it was some nonsense of yours, wasn't it, William?

WILLIAM—(*Astonished, whilst Jane is helping herself*)—Mine, sir?

SHACK.—(*Giving him the tip*)—Yes, yours. (*Aside*)—Say yes.

(*Jane threatens William with spoon with which she is helping herself.*)

WILLIAM—(*Goes round to L. of Shack., and says as if a little puzzled*)—Yes, it was some nonsense of mine. (*Hands fish to Shack.*)

SHACK.—(*Quite pleasantly*)—Well, what did you do it for?  
—(*Helping himself.*)

WILLIAM—I haven't the slightest idea, sir!

SHACK.—You did it to help me, didn't you? (*Aside*)—Say yes. (*Jane threatens him with her fish knife.*)

WILLIAM—Yes, sir; I did it to help you. (*Goes to sideboard for sauce.*)

(*Enter CLAUDE C. with entrée and three plates on butler's tray.*)

JANE—You see, my love, that comes of letting servants know your business. I've told you about it before. (*William comes down to Jane with sauce.*) You know what a fool William is. William, sauce to your master. (*William makes a movement of rage. Jane glares at him as he is handing sauce to her—with meaning.*) No sauce to me! (*William goes back to sideboard and puts sauce boat down.*)

KER.—(*Persisting*)—But who was the lady?

SHACK.—(Quite collectedly)—Oh—Ah! William, who was the lady?

(William takes no notice. Claude prods him with a fork.)

CLAUDE—Master's speaking to you.

(William kicks Claude and comes down to Jane.)

JANE—William, when you are disengaged, perhaps you'll answer this question.

WILLIAM—(Going to blurt out)—Oh, it was Mrs. Ch—

SHACK.—(Hurriedly interrupting William)—You see, Mr. Kershaw—(William takes Jane and Shack's plate away and goes up to sideboard. Claude comes down and gives Jane and Shack clean plates, then goes up to sideboard)—this is how it was. My little woman there was out of town, and knowing that you wished to see her, and not knowing that I had wired to her to come home to-day to meet you, and not knowing that she had got the wire, he, somehow, thinking that you wouldn't like it if you didn't see some lady, in an excess of zeal introduced the other lady.

KER.—(Sticking to it)—And who is she?

SHACK.—(Quietly)—William's wife.

(William L.C. at back drops two plates on floor; they smash. Shack. and Ker. turn and look at William, who is standing transfixed looking at them.)

JANE—William, that'll be stopped out of your wages at the end of your month! (Claude picks up part of the broken plates.)

KER.—Serve him right, careless fellow! So the lady he introduced was his own wife. That was very thoughtful of him. (William is picking up broken plates, and humors the business to make it last.)

JANE—Oh, yes, William is like that. I can assure you with all his faults, he would sacrifice everything for us. Wouldn't he, dear? (To Shack.)

SHACK.—(Earnestly)—As a faithful hound.

WILLIAM—(Rises with broken plates, aside)—Oh, I'll pay 'em back for this.

KER.—So she is your wife, William, eh?

(William comes down with entrée to L. of Jane. Claude brings clean plate down to Ker. and takes dirty one away.)

WILLIAM—(A little irritated, R.)—I leave it to you, sir. (Jane threatens him.) Oh, yes, sir; she's my wife.

KER.—I wish I could congratulate you; for of all the—well, you—but of course beauty is a matter of opinion.

(William hands entrée to Shack. L. of him.)

WILLIAM—Oh, quite, sir; how should *I* know anything about beauty? (*As he is coming from Shackleton to Kershaw he speaks this, glaring at Jane*)—Why, lor', I daresay if I was married to a good-looking girl I shouldn't keep her for long.

(*Comes round to L. of Ker. and hands him entrée.*)

KER.—(*Severely*)—You'd have to keep her for life, sir, whether she were pretty or not. You really must not go about the world passing off your wife as somebody else's. She's not a beauty, but she is yours; it's a great pity, but you'll have to put up with it.

WILLIAM—(*Severely*)—Have you finished, sir? (*Meaning his harangue.*)

KER.—(*Refusing entrée*)—Not any more, thank you.

WILLIAM—(*Severely*)—Thank you, sir.

(*Claude removes dirty plates from Shack. and Jane. Claret poured out. William gives clean plates to Jane and Shack. Claude hands sweets to William.*)

KER.—(*Drinking with enjoyment*)—Ah, that's good! I'm beginning to feel better! What's going on in London? Anything worth seeing? I should like to enjoy myself this evening!

JANE—(*Pointing to sweets which William has in his hand*—*William comes down to L. of Ker.*)—William, a tart for Mr. Kershaw!

KER.—No, thank you: no sweets.

(*William offers sweets to Shack. He refuses. Jane beckons him to bring them to her—he glares at her and turns away and goes up to sideboard.*)

Charley, my boy, your health. Mrs. Shackleton, may I?

JANE—With pleasure. (*They are about to drink!*)

KER.—(*Suddenly*)—Oh! And the dear child's health! (*He drinks, and Shack. and Jane pause with glasses in their hands, looking at each other.*)

WILLIAM—(*At back*)—That's a corker for them.

KER.—Oh, to be sure, I've quite forgotten. My dear, forgive me. I haven't asked after the dear child. (*Consternation.*)

(*Exit CLAUDE with tray.*)

SHACK.—(*Recovering himself*)—No, of course you haven't.

KER.—How silly of me! To put my foot in it like that. (*Leans over table, speaking to Jane, and puts his L. arm along the edge of table.*)

SHACK.—Jenny will never forgive you for this; will you, Jenny?

JANE—(*Recovering*)—Never. You naughty man, I'll punish you now—(*patting his R. hand, which is across table, with a spoon*)—for you shan't see it.

SHACK.—Ha, ha ! No, you shan't see it.

KER.—Oh, I must, my dear, I must. (*Half hides his face in his hand, bending his head down.*)

JANE—No, I'm so hurt that you positively—(*Rises, leans across table, and pats Kershaw's head with spoon*)—shan't see it at all. Shall he, Charley ?

SHACK.—I think she's quite right, Mr. Kershaw ; and you don't want to be bothered with a kid.

KER.—(*With politeness*)—My dear, when a man makes a mistake, such as mine, and offends a young mother—

WILLIAM—Oh, my stars !

KER.—He deserves to be punished !

JANE—Very well, then, that settles it—(*Picks flower out of a bowl in C. of table and throws it at him*)—You shan't see it. (*Kershaw picks up flower.*)

KER.—But wait a bit, for I shall—(*Turns away L., putting flower in button-hole.*)

SHACK.—(*Aside*)—He'll be very clever if he does.

KER.—I will not go back to Cornwall till I have seen it ; and what is more, I shall fine myself heavily, by making it a handsome present of money, which you must put in the bank for it.

SHACK.—(*Aside to Jane*)—This is good enough. (*Aloud*)—Then for the good of the child Jenny relents—don't you, Jenny ?

JANE—(*Feebly*)—Yes, I suppose I must.

KER.—(*To William*)—William (*William comes down C.*), go and tell the nurse to bring the little one down. (*Transfixed looks from Jane to S.*)

JANE—No, no ! You don't understand, Mr. Kershaw ; it's not in the house !

KER.—Oh, I see ; out for a walk !

SHACK.—Well, no ; that is, we don't know. Of course it may be. You see, this is one of my wife's little extravagances.

JANE—Charley ! (*Putting out her hand*).

SHACK.—My love ! (*taking her hand*) I promised to tell Mr. Kershaw the truth, but our little offspring—

WILLIAM—(*At sideboard*)—What !!

(*All turn.*)

SHACK.—William !

WILLIAM—(*Recovering himself*)—Beg pardon, sir ; forgot myself—thought the boy called me ! (*William puts things on tray.*)

KER.—You were saying your little offspring—

SHACK.—We were saying our little offspring—

JANE—It's with its nurse ; it shall be sent for.

KER.—(Rises and comes down L.)—That's all right.  
 SHACK. } (Rise—aside to each other)—Is it? (They come  
 JANE } down, Jane C. in front of table, Shack. R. of  
 her.)

WILLIAM—(At back)—They wish it was.

(Bell rings loudly off L.)

(William takes chair from back of table and puts it  
 at writing-table at back, also bowl of flowers;  
 clears table as quickly as he decently can.)

KER.—That may be the nurse with the baby.

SHACK.—(R.)—Oh, no; I don't think it is!

JANE—(R.C.)—Oh, no! she's such a gentle creature.

(Violent altercation heard in the hall between  
 Claude and a dun.)

A DUN—(Outside)—I tell you I will see him.

CLAUDE—(Outside)—You can't.

A DUN—(Outside)—I've had enough of this, etc., etc.

Enter CLAUDE (running in with butler's tray in  
 hand.)

CLAUDE—Oh, I say—(recollecting himself)—I beg your  
 pardon, sir.

SHACK.—What's the matter? (R.)

CLAUDE—Here's a cove from the livery stables called for  
 his money, and he says he won't go away till he  
 gets it.

SHACK.—Then you'd better ask him to sit down for a day  
 or two.

CLAUDE—Yes, sir.

(Claude puts tray on trestles at back, and exit C.)

SHACK.—(Aside to Jane)—This will help us a bit; back me  
 up now. (To Kershaw)—There you see, sir, more of  
 my wife's extravagances.

JANE—Oh, Charley!

SHACK.—Now, my darling, what did we promise our-  
 selves? To tell Mr. Kershaw the whole truth. This  
 is the kind of thing I have to endure every day of my  
 life. This is the fifth person who has called for his  
 account to-day. The place is full of bills, I have bills  
 all over me—for articles that I have never heard of—  
 never seen.

JANE—(Tearfully)—Oh, Charley, how can you say so?

SHACK.—My dear, the truth must be told. (Goes up R.,  
 takes cigarette out of box on cabinet R., lights it, and  
 sits on arm of chair up R.)

KER.—(Rises and goes to her)—Well, my dear, at the risk  
 of appearing unkind, I must tell you, that although  
 you are perhaps the most delightful little woman in

the world you have by your criminal extravagance simply ruined and blasted that fair young life. (*Kershaw points to Shack., who is very quietly smoking cigarette.*)

(*By this time William has cleared table of everything but tablecloth, and exits with tray C.*)

JANE—Oh, I know—I know, I see it now! Oh, Mr. Kershaw (*throwing her arms round his neck*) what a miserable thing I am. (*They both back and sit on sofa L.*)

KER.—(Soothing her)—You are, dear! you are!

JANE—Oh, if I had a friend like you to guide me!

KER.—(Rather liking it)—Yes, I wish you had, dear.

JANE—To think that I have brought him to this. (*Half turns to look at Shack., who is still quietly smoking.*)

Look at him now—pale, haggard, shattered in body and mind—and all through me—through me.—(*Sobbing violently on Ker.'s bosom.*)

KER.—There, there, we mustn't be too hard on you, little woman.

JANE—Oh, don't, don't!

KER.—We must see what can be done.

JANE—(*Recovering*)—Oh, thanks—(*Trying to get away*).

KER.—Don't move, unless you feel stronger.

JANE—I'm better now.

KER.—I don't mind sitting like this.

JANE—Oh, you are too good—(*Disengaging herself.*)

KER.—Not at all. And now let us thoroughly discuss the matter.

(*Creditor in passage shouting.*)

CRED.—Ain't I to 'ave no answer agen to-day?

(*Enter WILLIAM C. with bill—gives it to Shack. and begins folding tablecloth at table C.*)

(*Jane rises and comes C.*)

KER.—(*Rises*)—We had better settle with this man at once.

It's for carriage hire, isn't it; how much is it?

SHACK.—(*Has come down R. Aside to Jane*)—Twenty-five pounds fourteen— (*Bus. with Jane and Shack. together.*)

JANE—Fifty-two pounds, eighteen shillings, and four-pence.

KER.—(*A little staggered*)—Was this by the hour?

*Crosses to R. C. Shack. takes chair from R. of table and puts it R. of fireplace. William, having folded tablecloth, lets down R. leaf of table, pushes it R., and puts chair L. of it.) Well, I haven't got it about me. But I will be responsible.*

(*Jane crosses and sits on sofa.*)

KER.—William, tell the man downstairs that his account will be settled to-morrow.

WILLIAM—I've told him that already, sir—and he said, "Chestnuts."

KER.—Yes, my dear (*to Jane*), for *your* sake it shall be done. (*Crosses and sits beside her.*)

JANE—(*Sobbing on Ker.*)—My only friend.

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—Oh, she's takin' the old 'un on now. (*Aloud*)—I beg your pardon, sir, but—

SHACK.—(*R.C. by fireplace*)—William, don't you see Mr. Kershaw is busy with your mistress.

WILLIAM—Yes, sir (*aside, shaking his fist at Ker.*), I'd like to be busy with him.

(*Exit WILLIAM C.*)

KER.—And now, my dear children, to business. Now let me know the worst. How much do you owe? (*Takes out pocket-book for memoranda, etc.*)

SHACK.—(*C.*)—Well—er—at a rough guess, I should say about—er—um! (*To Jane. Gradually gets round back of settee and L. of Jane.*)

JANE—Well—er—yes, dear, I should think about that.

KER.—Well—we'll put it down at that—(*writes*). How much did you say?

JANE—(*Rather forgetting the character*)—I suppose a thousand wouldn't hurt you? (*Shack. L. of Jane nudges her.*)

KER.—(*Surprised*)—What?

JANE—(*Hurriedly*)—I mean a thousand kindnesses such as this would never be too many—to—er—ask—of—a generous heart like yours.

KER.—(*Chuckling her under chin*)—Never be too many if you asked me.

SHACK.—(*Aside to Jane*)—After that make it another five hundred.

JANE—Yes, I suppose we owe about fifteen hundred pounds.

KER.—(*Quietly*)—Yes. (*Putting it down.*)

SHACK.—(*Seeing Ker. takes it so quietly leans over Jane.*)—From that to two thousand.

KER.—Well, we'll see what can be done.

JANE—(*Winks at Shack.*)—There *may* be one or two items that we've forgotten to mention, to the amount of, a hundred or so.

KER.—I'll see to all that, I suppose it wouldn't be more than say—

JANE—(*Quickly*)—Oh, certainly not more than another five hundred!

SHACK.—(*Aloud*)—Oh, certainly not more than that.

(*Ker. rises and goes R. C.*)

JANE—(*Aside to Shack.*)—How much do I get out of this?  
 SHACK.—(*Aside*)—Shut up!—(*Goes up to fireplace and rings bell.*)

KER.—Well, my dear, as you have placed your affairs—  
 (*comes C.*) before me in so straightforward a manner,  
 I have only to say that all shall be put right. (*Goes up C.*) I'll go to the city and see about raising the  
 money at once. And I must get some for myself; but  
 mind, no more extravagances, you little puss. (*Comes to her.*) I think I deserve a kiss.

(Enter WILLIAM C.—*leaves door open C.*)

don't I, for all this?

JANE—Oh, yes, you darling! (*Kisses Ker.*)

WILLIAM—(*Roused—comes down R.C.*)—Gently does it, old  
 cockeywax.

KER.—William!

JANE—William, you forget yourself!

WILLIAM—(*Trying to be calm*)—Did you ring, sir? (*To Shack.*)

SHACK.—Mr. Kershaw's hat and stick.

WILLIAM—(*With intention*)—With pleasure, sir. (*Goes up, and exit C.*)

KER.—(*Goes up C.*)—Now, my dear, this business won't  
 take very long to settle, I hope. I must see the solicitor,  
 and then go to the city and arrange with the  
 broker, and I must buy some toys for the dear child.  
 I shan't be more than an hour or so, at the most—

(Enter WILLIAM C. with hat and stick.)

(*Comes down to Jane in front of settee*)—and then we'll  
 have a jolly evening all together, won't we? (*Takes her hands.*)

WILLIAM—(*comes down behind settee and puts hat between them in front of Kershaw's face*)—Your hat, sir! Ker. takes hat—William goes R.C.)

KER.—Good-bye, my dear! (*Kisses her.*)

SHACK.—Give Mr. Kershaw the stick, William. (*Turns away.*)

WILLIAM—(*Behind Ker. savagely raises stick*)—I should like to—(*Ker. turns and William hands stick very politely.*)

KER.—Thank you, William—(*goes up*)—you're a good fellow, William.

(*Exit C.—WILLIAM also exit C.*)

SHACK.—(*Comes down R.; directly he and Jane are alone, as she walks down he comes across*)—Oh, you are a little brick, you managed him splendidly. By George I must kiss you.

JANE—(*Turns on him with dignity*)—Mr. Shackleton, draw it mild.

SHACK.—I'm so grateful.

JANE—Now's your chance, then. How much?

SHACK.—*How* much?

JANE—That's it. How much am I to get out of these thousands?

SHACK.—To get?

JANE—Yes, no larks; name the figure. This is business.

SHACK.—(*Subdued*)—Oh, certainly! The £100 as agreed, of course—(*Goes R.*)

JANE.—But I got you more than you expected, and I stand in.

SHACK.—Oh, no, a bargain's a bargain, and this is business.

JANE.—Right you are, make it £200.

SHACK.—Nonsense, not me.

JANE.—Very well, then—(*goes up C.*)—I'll go and take off all this gorgeousness—(*turns R.C. up stage*)—and when Mr. Kershaw returns he finds me in my proper place.

SHACK.—No.

JANE—(*Comes down C.*)—Then make it £200.

SHACK.—(*Admiringly*)—You're pretty smart.

JANE—(*Winks*)—Think so?

SHACK.—Rather. (*Comes C.*)

JANE—(*Comes down C.*)—Yes, I know my way about—so drop compliments—£200.

SHACK.—(*Comes to her*)—It's a bargain—£200—(*Shakes hands and kisses her.*)

(Enter WILLIAM C.)

WILLIAM—(*Comes down R. indignantly*)—Give me my wages up to to-day, and I'll go.

SHACK.—Don't be foolish—(*Goes down R.*)—Don't you see it's all a joke?

WILLIAM—Oh, is it?—(*Very miserably*.)

(*Jane laughs and sits on sofa L., leans back, listening to the following dialogue much amused.*)

SHACK.—And I'm doing this for all our sakes, though your stupid blundering nearly spoiled everything.

WILLIAM—Oh, did it?

SHACK.—Of course we're not married, you know that.

WILLIAM—Oh, do I? (*Gradually works up these ejaculations.*)

SHACK.—I suppose it's not very pleasant to see your fellow-servant placed over you like this, but you needn't make a fool of yourself about it, it's only for a few hours now and things will come all right. (*Is R. of table R.*)

WILLIAM—Oh, will they?

SHACK.—I consider Jane has acted like a perfect little brick over this—she's a clever girl, a pretty girl, an exceedingly attractive girl, though I suppose *you* don't think so?

WILLIAM—Oh, don’t I?

SHACK.—And if I were not already engaged I believe I should marry her in reality.

WILLIAM—(*Shouting*)—Oh, would yer?—(*Glares at Shack., who coolly surveys him in astonishment.*)

JANE—(*As if recollecting something, swings herself round to a sitting posture at the same moment*)—Oh!!!

SHACK.—(*Turns*)—What’s the matter?

JANE—(*Rises slowly*)—We’ve forgotten the baby!

(*Shack. falls on table R.*)

WILLIAM—(*Half to Jane*)—Ha, ha! That settles you.

SHACK.—(*Indignantly*)—William, leave the room.

(*William goes up and stands at door hesitatingly.*)

JANE—William, leave the room.

(*Exit WILLIAM C.*)

JANE—(*Crosses to Shack., who is R. of table, she stands L. of table.*) Why didn’t you tell me there was a baby?

SHACK—I didn’t know it.

JANE—Then how did the old gentleman know it?

SHACK.—I suppose I must have written him that I had a youngster, but upon my soul I’ve forgotten all about it.

JANE—How old is it?

SHACK.—I don’t know.

JANE—A boy or a girl?

SHACK.—That I can’t tell you.

JANE—You’re a nice father. How long have we been married?

SHACK.—About three years.

JANE—How old is it?

SHACK.—I don’t know.

JANE—What are you going to do?

SHACK.—I don’t know. I rely on you to find a child.

JANE—(*Almost crying, goes C.*)—I can’t.

SHACK.—(*Coming C.*)—You must—without the child the thing is not complete. Kershaw is not deceived.

(*Wildly*)—Listen to me. No baby, no money. Now go, and remember you have to find me £200 worth of baby. (*Goes R.*)

(*Enter WILLIAM C. with coal scuttle. Goes to fireplace, having left door open.*)

JANE—(*Goes L.—heroically*)—That’s enough. I’ll brave every danger. I’ll find our child. (*Comes C.*)

SHACK.—Bless you for those words. (*Comes C., takes her hand, they both go up C.*)

JANE—Now go and leave it to me.

SHACK.—(*Embraces her at C. door.*)—Farewell.

(*Exit C.*)

JANE—(At door, turning quietly to William)—How are you going on?

WILLIAM—(Comes down R.C.)—I'm all wrong to-day. (Comes down C. Jane goes to sideboard L., and at glass arranges hair, etc.) At eight o'clock this morning I thought you was married to me, at twelve it seems that you are married to the governor. I have always considered Mrs. Chadwick a widow, but now she is my wife! I used to think that Mr. Shackleton —(Jane comes down L.)—was a bachelor; again I'm wrong, for he is married and got a baby. Oh, I am very wrong.

JANE—(Crosses to him)—Oh, yes, you are to worry about things like this. Don't I tell you it's all right.

WILLIAM—(Goes down R.)—Oh, yes, I suppose it's all right. I see my wife kissed by young fellows and cuddled by elderly gentlemen, that's all right; the old female party is proclaimed to be my bride, that's all right. You've arranged to find a baby and announce it as your own, that's all right. I can't stand much more of it, the end must come, and perhaps when the tomb has closed over me forever, someone will murmur—“What's the matter with William Tipson?”

JANE—(Has followed him, and as she speaks slaps him on back)—He's all right. Now promise that you'll keep it up until the old man goes back to-night.

WILLIAM—Will that be the end of it?

JANE—Oh, of course it will.

WILLIAM—Very well. I'll try and bear it till then.

JANE—You'll have to. (Goes up a little.)

WILLIAM—I hope you will make a good bit out of it.

JANE—You leave that to me. (Comes down a little.)

WILLIAM—Not all of it, ducky. I must touch a little of it.

But look here, Jane, there's one thing troubles me. About this child.

JANE—(Goes up C.)—Ah! that reminds me, I must go and fetch it.

WILLIAM—Don't you bring it here. (Goes up R.C.)

JANE—(Turns at door C.)—I shall, and if I have any of your nonsense I'll—

WILLIAM—What?

JANE—Bring two! (Exit C. quickly.)

WILLIAM—(Staggers back and leans on back of chair at writing-table)—This is awful. (Looks miserable.) I must take a drink. (Goes to sideboard and is drinking when Mrs. C. is heard outside.)

MRS. C.—(Outside.)—Is Mr. Shackleton in?

WILLIAM—Oh, she's here again. What does she want?

(Enter CLAUDE C., goes a little L.)

CLAUDE—(Confidentially)—Here's your good lady.

(Enter MRS. CHADWICK and LUCY C.)

WILLIAM—Do you wish to see the master?

MRS. C.—(Comes down C.—Lucy R.C. at back)—Yes, I do;  
I've come to demand an explanation.

WILLIAM—Well, master's out.

MRS. C.—(Sharply)—I can't help that.

LUCY—Aunt, dear, do try and be calm.

MRS. C.—I won't (*weeping*). I'll not be thrown aside in  
this manner. (Sits L. of table R.)

CLAUDE—(*Sympathetically, near door C.*)—Quite right,  
mum. William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!  
(William makes a movement towards Claude.)

MRS. C.—(To Claude)—What's the matter with you?

CLAUDE—Never mind—I know. William, gaze on your  
work. (William throws dinner roll, which is on side-  
board, at Claude.)

(Exit CLAUDE C. quickly.)

MRS. C.—Is everybody gone mad in this house?

WILLIAM—(Comes L.C.)—Most of us, I believe, mum.

MRS. C.—Now am I to understand that that girl—what's  
her name—Jane—is married to your master?

WILLIAM—Of course she ain't. (Pulls himself up.) Well, I  
don't know—I'm a bit doubtful.

LUCY—(Comes down R.)—Then how dare he introduce her  
as his wife?

WILLIAM—I suppose that is what he'd call his "fun"—he  
is like that sometimes.

LUCY—(*Half crying and indignant*)—It's too bad. I never  
thought Charley capable of such wickedness. I'll  
never speak to him again. (Goes up to fireplace and  
stands with back to audience.)

WILLIAM—(Goes up C.—to Lucy)—You see, miss, this is  
how it was. Mr. Shackleton had to produce a wife all  
in a hurry, this morning, and if you had only done  
what he asked you—pretended to be his wife.

LUCY—(*Indignantly*)—How dare you?

WILLIAM—Well, it would have saved a jolly lot of trouble,  
that's all. (Comes down L.)

MRS. C.—I don't think it would have been a good idea at all.

WILLIAM—Well, you were ready enough to do it.

MRS. C.—(Rises, comes to him. Aside)—Silence, hold  
your tongue! She doesn't know. (Goes down R.)

(Enter KERSHAW C. with toy trumpet, doll, air  
balloon, and drawing horse and cart behind  
him.)

KER.—(Seeing Mrs. C.—Lucy comes down R. of Mrs. C.)—  
Ah, the would-be Mrs. Shackleton! That wasn't a bad  
idea of yours—a—a—Mrs.—(William gives him the tip.)

WILLIAM—(Aside L.)—Tipson.

KER.—(C.)—Ah, Mrs. Tipson! Preferred the master to  
the man—what?

MRS. C.—Sir!

KER.—Oh, fie ! fie . At your time of life, too. I wonder your husband allowed it !

MRS. C.—My what ! (William makes frantic signs to her.)

KER.—And this good fellow, I trust, treats you well ; and I've no doubt you are very comfortable together. (Mrs. C. speechless) Any family ? (Mrs. C. shricks and goes to Lucy) Evidently not ! Ah, a tender point !

LUCY—(Soothing Mrs. C.)—Aunt, dear, don't take any notice of this—this *rude* old man.

KER.—Come, I say, William, speak to your niece. (Ker. crosses L. and William goes to them.)

LUCY—How dare you ?

WILLIAM—(Aside to Mrs. C.)—Keep it up. I said you were *my* wife.

MRS. C.—Upon my word I—

WILLIAM—(R.C. pleadingly)—Oh, keep it up, he's going away to-night. (Gives stage to Ker. as he crosses and gets a little behind him L.C.)

KER.—(Crosses to Mrs. C.—to her)—And now let me tell you that I'm very pleased with you, Mrs.—Mrs.—

WILLIAM—(As before)—Tipson.

KER.—Ah, Tipson. (Lucy looks aghast—Mrs. C. at William, who reassures her.)

KER.—It was very good of you to try and help my young friend out of his trouble. You made it a little bit worse for him certainly—but you did it for the best—and—(pulling out purse) there's five shillings for you. (Goes L.)

WILLIAM—(Hurriedly)—Keep it up. (Directly she takes it William takes it from her; business and words together.)

KER.—I suppose your master and mistress won't be long now. (Sits on sofa L. To Mrs. C. and Lucy)—You'd better go before they return. Tell your wife to go, William.

WILLIAM—Yes, you'd better go.

MRS. C.—I shall not.

WILLIAM—(C. with dignity in reproof)—Amelia ! (Points to door.)

MRS. C.—Why you—(Turns to Lucy)—Did you hear that, Lucy ?

LUCY—Yes, Aunt. (Crosses.)

WILLIAM—Well, what do you think of it, Loo ?

LUCY—(Comes C.)—If you insult my aunt—

WILLIAM—(Aside to Lucy.)—Keep it up. Call me Uncle Billy.

LUCY—(L. R. C.)—Ha, ha, ha ! (laughing aside—then aloud) But what are we to go for ?

KER.—(L.)—Why, you see, it's going to be quite a little family affair. You know what they've gone for, don't you ?

MRS. C.—(R.) and LUCY—(R.C.)—Who?

KER.—Mr. and Mrs. Shackleton.

LUCY and MRS. C.—No—what?

(*William is up C. in terror.*)

KER.—To fetch the baby.

(*Consternation of Mrs. C. and Lucy.*)

LUCY—Oh, aunt!—(*Goes down R. to her aunt.*)

WILLIAM—(*Aside*)—But they can't find a baby, and it'll upset everything. I'd better prepare the way a bit. (*Aloud—crossing down L. to Ker., who is still seated on sofa L.*)—Look here, sir, the fact is I don't believe there is a baby.

(*Mrs. C. and Lucy together get a little up R.*)

KER.—I tell you they've gone to fetch it.

WILLIAM—(*To Ker.*)—I assure you, sir, there is no child. And they thought it better that I should break it to you.

KER.—And they've asked you to do this?

WILLIAM—(*Eagerly catching the idea—Aside*)—They'll never know. I'll save everything. (*Aloud*)—Yes, sir, they did. And asked me to beg your forgiveness—that's why they've gone away, they couldn't face you without a child.

KER.—(*Rises and crosses R.C. angrily*)—Then they've utterly deceived me.

(*MUSIC—Bell rings.*)

WILLIAM—(*Goes down L.*)—Here they are, sir. Now you'll see if I am right or not.

KER.—(*R.C. emphatically*)—I'm disgusted—you heard him—he said I should see his child.

WILLIAM—(*With equal emphasis*)—I say you won't.

(*Enter Jane and Shack. arm in arm down C. of stage—Jane with child on her L. arm. Shack. pointing triumphantly to baby as they come down. William gives yell and falls head first on sofa.*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

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SECOND PICTURE.

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WILLIAM lying on sofa.

MRS. C. and LUCY.

SHACK.

KER. blowing

JANE showing baby.

trumpet and showing baby doll in chair L. of table looking at baby.

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## ACT III.

SCENE—The Same.

*Furniture arranged as in Act I. Armchair at fireplace is turned round.*

(KERSHAW'S overcoat on table extreme R. by door; clothes brush on cabinet R.)

(SHACKLETON discovered seated on seat round fireplace. He is in evening dress, with jacket, smoking cigarette.)

SHACK.—Well, I suppose things are coming all right now. But oh! the worry of it! And to think that after a genius like Jane had so skilfully arranged about the baby, borrowed it from a friend of hers, “for an amateur performance I am giving to-day,” and then that imbecile William—(*rises and comes down L.*)—nearly spoilt the whole thing by saying there wasn't a baby, the fool. And what on earth brought Lucy and the old lady here just at that particular moment? The sight of the youngster sent them flying from the house, so I suppose it's all off between me and Lucy. (*Goes up L. a little.*)

(Enter KERSHAW R.)

KER.—(*Comes C.*)—Well, my dear boy, how do I look? It never struck me that we might go to the theatre this evening, or I would have brought my dress clothes.

SHACK.—Oh, it doesn't matter, but William might have lent you a suit. (*Puts cigarette in ash tray on table L.*)

KER.—Ah, don't you think you had better get rid of that man, William? Do you know, I begin to think he's a bit of a humbug.

SHACK.—No! Whatever makes you think that?

KER.—Why, all that nonsense about the baby. Why, I told you he said there wasn't one, you know.

SHACK.—Disgraceful.

KER.—And his wife backed him up.

SHACK.—His wi—oh, did she?

KER.—And so did his niece.

SHACK.—His ne—(*aside—going L.*)—Who the devil's his niece? (*Aloud, comes C.*)—Oh, they're dangerous people to have about the place. But, you see, with regard to William, he's been telling so many lies to my creditors and other callers lately, that it's becoming a habit with him—he can't help telling them.

KER.—Yes, but why say he'd never seen the baby?

SHACK.—Ah! *that's* when he spoke the truth—by accident. He never had seen it.

KER.—Oh, how's that?

SHACK.—(*Aside—goes L. a little*)—Oh, Lord, I wish he'd shut up. (*Aloud*)—Why, you see—er—fact is, you know, my wife doesn't want it known that we *have* a child—funny fancy, isn't it? But some women are that way, but we go to see it, you know—it's never been here before. Of course you can't tell these things to servants, you know. (*This speech nervously and hesitatingly*.)

KER.—(*Reflecting*)—M'no! No—(*taking out watch*)—I suppose there's no mistake about my being able to catch the 12:10 from Paddington to-night?

SHACK.—Oh, no! (*Goes L. Aside*)—I'll see to that.

(*Kershaw goes up C. to look at clock on mantel.*)

(*Aloud—turns*)—But must you really go?

KER.—Oh, yes, my dear boy. I've nothing to keep me now. I've arranged that the money is to be handed over to you to-morrow, so don't trouble about *that* any more. And the first object of my visit is accomplished. (*Comes down*.) I've seen you, your charming wife, and your baby that I've looked forward to seeing for the last two years. (*Suddenly*)—Wait a minute—it *is quite* two years since you wrote and told me it was born, isn't it?

SHACK.—(*Aside*)—Great Scott!

KER.—It's very young for two years old, isn't it?

SHACK.—It's two years; besides, *this* isn't the one. *That's* the other.

KER.—*Which* is the other?

SHACK.—The one—(*Goes to him*)—The one at school.

KER.—At school at two years old!

SHACK.—Yes, and getting on very well. (*Goes L.*)

KER.—(*Severely*)—You never told me there were *two*.

SHACK.—Didn't I? It slipped my memory. (*Comes C.*) Oh, yes, the dear little thing is at school, another of my wife's fancies.

KER.—I'm beginning to think your wife is a very eccentric creature. However, I'm very glad I've seen this one. I shall send it a silver mug. I'll have it engraved with its name. By the way, what *is* its name?

SHACK.—(*Aside in agony*)—Christopher.

KER.—Eh?

SHACK.—(*Aloud*)—Fred.

KER.—Your wife told me it was a girl.

SHACK.—Erica—Frederica. Always call her Fred for short.

KER.—(*Doubtfully*)—Yes, it saves confusion, doesn't it? (*Goes R.*)

(Enter JANE L. in full evening dress, theatre cloak on her arm; comes straight to C.)

JANE—Now, dear, are you ready? Will you ask if the carriage has come?

SHACK.—(Goes up to fireplace, amused)—Certainly—(Rings bell.)

JANE—(Comes L.C.)—Mr. Kershaw, may I trouble you to button my glove!

KER.—(Comes to her and buttons her glove)—With pleasure!

(Enter CLAUDE C. Leaves door open.)

SHACK.—(At fireplace)—Is the carriage at the door?

CLAUDE—No, sir.

SHACK.—(Leans on back of chair in front of fireplace)—Let me know when it comes.

(Claude gazes sentimentally at Jane—sighs, and exits C.)

JANE—Thank you, Mr. Kershaw. Won't you take a little something before we go?

SHACK.—A glass of the old. (Coming down R. of table.)

KER.—Thank you, I will. (Goes up to sideboard L.—helps himself.)

JANE—(Crosses R. to Shack, gives him her cloak. He helps her on with it, and she speaks up at him)—The baby's in the other room, fast asleep, and Polly Pixton's coming for it at half-past seven—so we shall just get out in time, and I'll leave word that she's to have it when she calls.

SHACK.—Good girl. (Arranging her cloak for her.)

JANE—Thank you, Charley, dear. (Looking up at him.)

KER.—(Coming L.C. a little, with glass of wine in hand)—Now before we go, there's one thing I have to say—one thing I must insist on. I don't like this little one being sent away—I mean in the charge of strangers. It's too young, and requires a mother's care—do you understand? You mustn't let that child go away again. (Goes up to sideboard.)

SHACK.—Certainly not; if you don't wish it.

JANE—(Aside)—Then we must get away at once. It's getting on for half-past seven, and Polly will be here.

SHACK.—Are you ready, dear? (Goes up a little R.)

JANE—(Goes up to back C.)—Yes, I think I am all right.

KER.—(Admiringly, comes C. a little)—I should think so. No one would think that you were the mother of two children. (Goes back to sideboard.)

JANE—(Staggering down C. a little)—How many?

SHACK.—(R. of table breaking in)—Yes—ha, ha! (Kershaw turns to them)—I've told him, I've told him.

JANE—(Awkwardly)—Oh, have you? (Ker. turns away from them.) That was very thoughtful of you

(*Aside, glaring at him across table*)—You might have mentioned it to me.

SHACK.—I couldn't.

JANE—How on earth am I to know what to do?

KER.—(*Turns*)—I hear he is getting on very well.

JANE—Is he? Oh, I daresay.

SHACK.—(*With intention as if giving her the tip*)—Yes, at school.

JANE—Ah, at school! (*Aside to Shack.*)—Would you mind telling me *who* is at school?

SHACK.—Our eldest.

JANE—I haven't got to produce *him*, have I?

SHACK.—No, no!

JANE—That's all right—(*Coming a little C. To Ker.*)—Oh, yes, Mr. Kershaw—he's a very promising lad—he's won several prizes.

SHACK.—(*As if to warn her*)—Ah!

KER.—(*Comes down L.*)—At two years old?

JANE—Oh, two! (*pulling herself together.*) Now, Charley, you know I didn't believe you when you told me—(*goes to L. of table R.*)—that he'd won all those prizes.

SHACK.—(*Playfully pats her L. cheek with his R. hand*)—I only said it to please you.

JANE—(*Playfully pats him on R. cheek with her fan*).—Bad boy! Bad boy!

(*Enter CLAUDE C.*)

CLAUDE—The kerridge is come, sir.

(*Ker. crosses extreme R.*)

KER.—Then I'll put my coat on.

CLAUDE—And here's a young person wants to see Mrs. pertickler.

(*Enter MRS. PIXTON C. She is a very masculine, tall, common woman.*)

JANE—(*Aside*)—Polly Pixton! Too late!

MRS. P.—(*Quietly L.*)—I've come for the baby. (C. at back.)

(*Shack. helps Ker. to put his coat on.*)

JANE—(*Crosses L.*) Hush! (Mrs. P. looks at her in surprise.)

MRS. P.—(*Coming a little forward*)—Well, you are a swell!

JANE—Be quiet!

MRS. P.—You ain't been playing in the amachoor performance, have you? (Ker. has coat on by this time, and Shackleton gets clothes brush from cabinet R.) Where's baby? (Ker. turns.) Pixton has been getting anxious about it, and wouldn't let me rest till I fetched it.

KER.—I suppose this is the nurse.

MRS. P.—Oh, do yer?—dear me.

SHACK.—(*Commences brushing Ker.'s coat*)—Of course ; this is the charming lady who comes to take the baby when we go out. (*Winks at her.*)

MRS. P.—(*Aside to Jane*)—What's he talking about? (*He winks again.*) Ask him not to do that—Pixton wouldn't like it ; and you know what Pixton is when he's roused.

JANE—(*L. aside*)—Take no notice. (*Aloud*)—You must never take it away any more, my good woman. You can stay and mind it here till we come back.

MRS. P.—(*Anxiously*)—Look here, what do you mean ? Where's the child ? There ain't no harm come to it, is there ?

JANE—Of course not—the child is all right. In there, fast asleep—(*Points to L. door.*)

MRS. P.—(*Aside*)—There's something going on—(*C.*)—Now, understand, I shan't go without it. You can't keep a child from its mother.

KER.—(*R.*)—Its mother ?

SHACK.—(*R.*)—Of course—*Foster-mother*—(*Turns Ker. round away from Mrs. P., and brushes him again*)—she's forgotten the foster. They get so fond of them, they always think the children are their own.

MRS. P.—Think they're their own. I should like to hear you say that to Pixton.

SHACK.—Who's he ?

MRS. P.—Pixton's my husband, young man. And who are you ?

SHACK.—Not Pixton—thank goodness.

MRS. P.—Oh, indeed ; that's funny, ain't it ?—(*Speaks across table R. to Shack.*)—Now, then, are you going to let me have that child ?—(*Shack. is R.*)

SHACK.—(No ! *Goes up R. a little.*)

MRS. P.—(*Crosses to Jane, says deliberately*)—Am I to have that child ?

JANE—No !—(*Down L. and up L.*)

MRS. P.—(*Stalking up to Ker., who is R. C., speaks as before*)—Am I to have that—

KER.—(*Going to shout*)—N—(*not liking the look of her, subsides.*) You heard what they said.

MRS. P.—(*Goes up C. in a white heat*)—Oh, very well—then there's only one thing to be done now. (*At C. door*)—You've brought it on yourselves—so don't blame me.

JANE—(*Comes L.C.*)—What are you going to do ?

MRS. P.—I'm going to fetch Pixton.

(*Exit MRS. PIXTON C.*)

SHACK.—(*After slight silence, nervously brushes his hair with clothes brush and sits in armchair at back R. C.*)—Ha, ha ; silly woman, isn't she ?

KER.—Y—yes—she is very violent.

JANE—I never saw her like that before.

SHACK.—(Rises)—She's been drinking.

JANE—(Going up C.)—Well, we'd better get along to the theatre.

KER.—Yes, come along.—(They are going out C. when Ker. stops.) But you are not going to leave the child without anyone to take care of it.

JANE—(Indifferently)—Oh, it'll be all right. It's asleep in there. (Points L.)

KER.—(Returning, comes down R.)—Is it? Then we won't go—we'll stay and take care of it. (Sits R. of table R.)

SHACK.—(Aside to Jane)—We shall never get the old man away. (Goes up to fireplace)—William can look after it. (Rings bell.)

JANE—(Quickly)—Yes, William shall take care of it. (Exits L. to fetch baby.)

KER.—Do you think he's fit to be trusted with it?

SHACK.—What! William!—(Comes down to back of table R.)—I'd trust him with untold children.

(Enter WILLIAM C., face pale and altogether looking miserable.)

WILLIAM—(L. C. feebly)—Did you ring, sir?

SHACK.—(R. C. at back.)—Yes, William; my wife and I and Mr. Kershaw are going out, and the baby is—not to be left.

WILLIAM—(L. C. at back.)—Do you take it with you, sir?

KER.—Certainly not. You are to mind it.

WILLIAM—Me!

SHACK.—(Goes to him)—Yes, you. (Aside)—Don't look so scared.

WILLIAM—(Aside to Shack.)—This is heaping it up too thick.

SHACK.—(Aside)—But look at the coin.

WILLIAM—(Aside)—I hope I shall.

SHACK.—(Goes back to back of table)—Now, William, you must take the greatest care of it, and remember that it's nurse, its foster-mother, who was here just now, is not to be allowed to take it away on any account. She has been most rude; hasn't she, Mr. Kershaw?

KER.—Oh, disgusting!

SHACK.—And she is discharged—permanently discharged—so you must be a mother to it.

WILLIAM—(Resignedly)—Very well, sir. (Aside)—I hope I shall keep from strangling it.

(Enter JANE L. with baby.)

JANE—(As she comes in)—There's a little duckens.

KER.—(*Rises and comes in front of table*)—What a pretty sight. Isn't it, Charley?

SHACK.—Beautiful. Isn't it?

JANE—(*To baby*)—I don't like leaving the darling.

SHACK.—Oh, it's all right, dear; William will nurse it.

JANE—Will he? (*Gushingly.*)

SHACK.—Yes; he's delighted.

JANE—(*Aside*)—He looks it.

KER.—(*Going up a little*)—Then it's all arranged, and we can be off?

SHACK.—(*Going R.*)—Yes; wait a bit, whilst I change my coat. (*Exit R.*)

JANE—(*Going to William C.*)—Here's the darling, William; take it. (*Places it in William's arms.*) Be a father to it. (*Crosses R. C.*)

WILLIAM—(*C. a little at back. Gazes at them wildly, and then bursts out*)—No, I'm damned if I do.

JANE—William, how dare you? (*R.C.*)

WILLIAM—Dare! I dare! I've stood this game long enough, but when it comes to fathering *this*—I'll show you what I dare.

KER.—(*Mildly*)—Come, my good fellow.

WILLIAM—(*Passionately, coming down L.C.*)—You shut up—you mouldering old ruin. You've been the cause of this.

KER.—I have?

WILLIAM—(*Coming down a little*)—Yes, you—coming interfering; but what makes me mad is to think that if you hadn't I should have been none the wiser, but now I know all—all! (*Sits on sofa L., glaring at baby.*)

JANE—(*With authority*)—Be quiet, William! (*During the next speeches she gets back a little, so as to be close to arm chair for situation.*)

WILLIAM—I won't—I say I know all!

KER.—All what?

WILLIAM—This child belongs to my wife.

KER.—What—the old lady?

WILLIAM—No; she's not my wife.

KER.—Then who on earth *is* your wife?

WILLIAM—(*Rising and pointing to Jane*)—She is.

(*Jane screams, and falls on easy chair up R. Kershaw gives a shout of astonishment.*)

WILLIAM—(*Pleased at the effect*)—I rather fancy that's upset some of the arrangements.

KER.—But *she* is Mrs. Shackleton.

WILLIAM—No, she's not; she's married to me.

KER.—(*To Jane—indignantly*)—I don't believe you're married at all.

JANE—Sir ! (Rises, comes down, and spreads certificate on table R., stands with severe look, facing audience. L. of table. Ker. sits R. of table R. and looks at it, and asks)—

KER.—What's this ? A marriage certificate. Who is Jane Reynolds ?

JANE—I am—I mean, I *was*.

KER.—I see you're described here as a domestic servant.

JANE—Quite right, sir—I'm Mr. Shackleton's housemaid.

KER.—Very pretty !

JANE—Thank you, sir.

KER.—I mean all these lies—now what did you do it for ?  
(Takes out notes.)

JANE—£200 and arrears of wages.

WILLIAM—(L. with baby)—And now we've lost it all.

KER.—No, tell me the truth, and you shan't lose by it.  
(Holds up notes to them.) Now, tell me, honestly, is he married ?

JANE—No, sir, he's not ; he ain't got no wife, that's why he got me to personate one. (Gives Jane notes, which Jane takes.)

KER.—In order to deceive me. And is that your child ?

(Jane looks at William, then at audience, and then at Kershaw.)

JANE—(Severely)—Would you kindly look at the date of that certificate, sir. (Goes up.)

KER.—I beg your pardon. (Rises, comes C. to William.) Where did the child come from ?

JANE—I borrowed it from my cousin. (Comes down R. of Kershaw, and takes certificate off table.) The woman who was here just now.

KER.—The Pixton woman ?

JANE.—(R.)—The same, sir. (Goes up R.C. a little.)

WILLIAM—Three cheers for Pixton.

KER.—I begin to grasp it.

WILLIAM—(Comes to him, placing baby in his arms)—Then you'd better take hold of it. (Returns to L.)

KER.—Here, I say.

(Shack. heard whistling off R.)

WILLIAM—It's out of my hands now. Here's the governor—make him explain it if he can, and I think it'll settle him.

(Enter SHACKLETON R. jauntily.)

SHACK.—(To Jane)—Now, ducky.

JANE—Not so much of your ducky. (Goes up C.)

SHACK.—(R. Looks astonished)—Eh ? I'm all ready.

KER.—(L.C. with baby)—So are we.

SHACK.—(Going to Jane)—Then come along.

JANE—Oh ! (*Backs away from him.*)

SHACK.—(*To Ker.*)—Give the baby to William.

WILLIAM—Not me.

SHACK.—What does this mean ?

WILLIAM—(*Extreme L.*)—I've blown the gaff, governor.

You heaped it up too thick on me ! flesh and blood couldn't stand it.

(*Goes up L. behind settee to Jane, who is C. at back.*)

KER.—I know all.

SHACK.—(*To Jane and William, who are together at back C.*)—You fools ! (*Goes down R.*) Not one farthing do you get from me.

JANE—(*Flourishes notes*)—Well, we don't want it—my husband and I.

SHACK.—(*In horror*)—Your what ? Who is your husband ?

WILLIAM—(*Puts Jane's arm through his*)—I am—we throw up our situations ; you can keep the arrears of wages.

KER.—No ; they shall be paid you, faithful souls.

SHACK.—Outside, faithful souls.

WILLIAM—We're going, sir—(*Going up, turns*)—No offence, but as soon as you can get suited—

SHACK.—Go to the devil !

JANE—No, sir ; I go to my humble walk.

WILLIAM—Our humble milk-walk in life.

JANE—Come along, William ; we haven't done so badly—(*Flourishes notes, as they go he makes a snatch, she takes them away*)—Not for Jane !

(*Exeunt C.*)

SHACK.—(*Up R.C., at back, near arm chair*)—Look here, Mr. Kershaw, I can explain all this.

KER.—(*Going up to him*)—Don't you think that you've explained a good many things to me already ?

SHACK.—Yes, perhaps you're right.

(*Sits on chair up R., in front of fireplace.*)

KER.—So now, you understand, sir, that not one penny of that money do you receive.

SHACK.—What !

KER.—No, and what's more, I'll commence proceedings to recover what you have obtained from me by fraud.

SHACK.—Fraud ! Listen to me.

KER.—Never. I'll go to my solicitor at once.

SHACK.—You can't. His office is closed.

KER.—Then I'll go to his private house. (*Going up C.*)

Oh, you'll find I'm not to be trifled with. For the present, sir, good night. (*Is going, when he remembers he has the baby in his arms. Returns and places it in Shackleton's arms.*) Your child, sir. (*Goes up again C.*)

SHACK.—(*Rises and comes C.*)—Here, what am I to do with it?

KER.—Send it to school with the other fraud. (*Exit C.*)

SHACK.—(*Looking at baby, R.C.*)—I've utterly ruined myself this time. Lucy will probably never speak to me again. Jane and William are married—they have insulted me and thrown up their situations. Mr. Kershaw's going to prosecute me for fraud. I'm the acknowledged father of a child I've never seen before—and I've done it all in one day. (*Comes down a little.*) It's wonderful what you can do if you try. (*Looks at baby.*) Oh, Lord, it's going to cry. (*Calls*)—William. (*Crosses R. then L.—shakes forefinger at baby*)—Now don't you begin on me. (*Calls*)—William. What's the right thing to do, I wonder? (*Calls*)—William. (*Soothes baby*)—There, there!

(*Enter WILLIAM C.*)

WILLIAM—(*Comes down C.*)—Yes, sir.

SHACK.—(*Comes C. to him*)—Just hold the baby a minute.

WILLIAM—I won't deprive you of it, sir.

SHACK—Then you refuse.

WILLIAM—Yes, sir.

SHACK.—(*Goes L.*)—There, don't cry. (*To baby; walks with it L. to R. and talks to William*)—How long have you been married to Jane?

WILLIAM—We was married this morning, sir.

SHACK.—Why didn't you tell me of it? (*Extreme R.*)

WILLIAM.—(*L. C.*)—I haven't had a chance—we've all been so busy.

SHACK.—(*R.*)—Well, go and tell Jane to fetch this baby, and take it where she got it from.

WILLIAM—I can't, sir—she's gone out with Mr. Kershaw.

SHACK.—Gone out with Mr. Kershaw? (*R.*)

WILLIAM—Yes, they've gone to the lawyer's private house to tell him all about your capers.

SHACK.—(*Goes C. pathetically*)—William, take this baby home for me.

WILLIAM—I don't know who it belongs to.

SHACK.—Go and send Claude to me, perhaps *he* knows. (*Goes down R.*)

WILLIAM—I shouldn't be surprised, sir.

(*Exit C.*)

SHACK.—I'd better inform the police. I wonder where Mrs. Brixton lives. I wonder if she's coming back. (*Suddenly remembering.*) Of course, she's gone to fetch her husband.

(*Enter CLAUDE C.*)

SHACK.—Do you know anything about children?

CLAUDE—I'm the eldest of eight, sir, and mother goes out a-charing.

SHACK.—(*Comes C. and gives Claude baby*)—Then you can be trusted to mind *one* for a few minutes.

CLAUDE—Are you going out, sir?

SHACK.—Yes, to the police station.

CLAUDE—Are you going to give it in charge?

SHACK.—Yes, if they'll take the charge.

(*Exit R.*)

CLAUDE.—(*Stands looking after him*)—He's a hot 'un—he seems to have broke it off with Jane. He's a regular Turk. (*Sits on sofa L.*)

*Enter MRS. CHADWICK, comes down C.)*

MRS. C.—(*Looks around*)—Has Miss Lucy been here?

CLAUDE—No, mum.

MRS. C.—What are you doing with that child?

CLAUDE—Minding it, mum.

MRS. C.—Who told you to?

CLAUDE—Master, mum.

MRS. C.—Whose child is this? (*Taking up baby.*)

CLAUDE—Can't say, mum. Is it yours?

MRS. C.—Silence!

CLAUDE—You'd better put it down, mum. I can see it ain't yours by the way you handles it.

MRS. C.—Has its naughty mother been away all this time!

CLAUDE—(*Overhearing the last sentence*)—Oh, then, it is hers. (*Rises, goes L.*)

MRS. C.—(*Kissing it*)—There, my precious. Do you know where your master's gone?

CLAUDE—To the police station.

MRS. C.—What for?

CLAUDE—To give the baby in charge.

MRS. C.—Never. I shall take the child away. (*Going up C.*)

CLAUDE—But what shall I say when they come back?

MRS. C.—Say what you like. (*Stops at door.*) No, I had better not be seen going that way with a baby in my arms. (*Comes down C. and goes to door L. and looks off.*) Where does this passage lead to?

CLAUDE—The servants' entrance.

MRS. C.—That'll do. (*Exit with baby L.*)

CLAUDE—(*Goes up L. to C. door*)—I suppose it's all right. I was told to mind it. But they can't object to its mother taking it.

(*Exit C. Door left open. Enter SHACKLETON R. Goes up C.*)

SHACK.—I'm not going to wait any longer, and I can't face old Kershaw again.

(Enter LUCY C.)

SHACK.—Lucy !

LUCY—Oh, Charley, dear, I'm so unhappy. I couldn't stop away from you. (They both go down R.)

MRS. P.—(Off C., loudly)—Now then ; where's that young man ?

SHACK.—Hello ! Here's the woman who will set me right, Lucy.

(Enter CLAUDE C., being pushed on by MRS. PIXTON, who flings him down L.)

MRS. P.—(Comes down C.)—Now then, are you going to give it up quiet ?

LUCY—What a very violent woman. Who is she ? (Sits R. of table R.)

SHACK.—My good woman, don't excite yourself.

MRS. P.—I only want my child, that's all.

SHACK.—(Turns to her C.)—Very well.

MRS. P.—Oh, is it ? Understand Pixton's down in the 'all—(loudly and deliberately)—and we mean having our child.

SHACK.—(Shouting)—You shall have it.

MRS. P.—(Quietly)—Oh, that's all right. I thought Pixton would frighten you. Where is it ?

SHACK.—Give the lady her baby, Claude.

CLAUDE—(Frightened)—It's gone, sir. (Coming down L.)

ALL—Gone !

SHACK.—Where ?

CLAUDE—Its mother took it.

(Consternation of Lucy and Shack. Mrs. Pixton shrieks, and goes to door shrieking " Pixton ! Pixton ! ")

MRS. P.—Now there'll be bloodshed. (Stands R. of door, looking very severe.)

(Enter PIXTON, a very meek and mild little man, not more than 5 feet high if possible in tall hat.)

Pixton, be calm. Now mind what you do. Control your passion !

PIXTON—(With mild assertiveness)—Oh, come, look here, you know—this kind of thing won't do at all, you know.

MRS. P.—Be calm, Pixton. Tell them quietly what will happen if they don't.

PIXTON—Well ; I shall have to summons you, you know.

MRS. P.—(Flings him aside R.)—Bah ! Come out.

PIXTON—Yes, you arrange it, dear. (To Shack.)—We'll let you see. (Sits on arm-chair up R.)

MRS. P.—(*To Claude, shaking him up*)—Now then, what do you mean by "its mother's got it"?

SHACK.—Yes; who's its mother?

CLAUDE.—Mrs. Chadwick.

ALL—*Who?*

(*Pixton rises.*)

CLAUDE—She's only just gone away with it.

MRS. P.—(*Seizing Pixton*)—Come on.

PIXTON—Where are we going now?

MRS. P.—To bring back that woman with our child.  
(*Dragging him up C.*)

PIXTON—But we don't know her.

MRS. P.—(*To Claude*)—Then you come with us, and point her out.

CLAUDE—No, I shan't.

PIXTON—(*Comes down to him*)—Look here, young fellow, I haven't started yet, you know—but if I do—  
(*Claude shows fight.*) Well, I think you'll be rather surprised; that's all.

SHACK.—Claude, no nonsense; go with these people and find Mrs. Chadwick.

CLAUDE—But suppose she won't give it up, sir? (*Goes up L.*)

MRS. P.—We'll see about that. (*Goes to Claude and talks to him in dumb show.*)

PIXTON—Ah, we'll see about that. No woman shall keep my child from me. I'm not to be trifled with. I'm a husband, a father, and, I think I may add, a man.  
(*Mrs. P. comes to him.*) And standing here as I do

(*Mrs. P. catches hold of him*)—

MRS. P.—O come along. (*Going up C.*)

(*Enter Mrs. CHADWICK, with baby L.*)

MRS. C.—The area gate is locked (*starts*).

LUCY—Auntie.

MRS. P.—There she is with my baby.

MRS. C.—Your baby?

SHACK.—Yes; give it to her at once.

MRS. C.—You wicked young man, why you know it's your baby, and you're only trying to get rid of it.

MR. P.—(*Dramatically, and pointing to Mrs. C.*) Woman, do you hear this?

MRS. P.—Shut up. (*Pixton goes back R.C.*)

(*Enter JANE, KERSHAW, and WILLIAM, who goes L.*)

JANE—What's the matter? (*Comes C.*)

SHACK.—You can explain. Isn't that Mrs. Pixton's child?

JANE—Of course it is. (*Goes to Mrs. C.—takes baby.*)

KER.—(*R.C.*)—You've actually spoken the truth at last.

JANE—(*Gives baby to Mrs. P., who is L.C.*)—Here you are, Polly. (*Goes down L. and up L. to William.*)

SHACK.—(*Crosses to Mrs. P. and gives money*)—And here you are, Polly.

(*Goes back to R. to side of Lucy, who is sitting R. of table.*)

PIXTON—(*Coming Mrs. P.*)—How much? (*Aside.*)

MRS. P.—Two sovereigns.

PIXTON—That's all right.

MRS. P.—Good-night.

(*Mrs. P. goes up C. Exit C. Claude goes up L. and exit C. Jane goes to William L.C. Pixton comes down to L. of table, and looks across at Lucy and Shackleton.*)

PIXTON—If ever you should want anything in our way again, sir—(*gives card*) families supplied on shortest notice.

(*Hurries to door.*)

Good-evening.

(*Goes up C., turns and stands at door.*)

Good-evening, and if you should.

MRS. P.—(*Arm is seen*)—She pulls him away—(*and says outside*)—Oh, come on.

(*Pixton disappears suddenly.*)

SHACK.—(*To Ker.*)—Well, sir, I hope your interview with your solicitor was satisfactory. I suppose I've about ruined myself.

KER.—(*Comes down C. Mrs. Chad. sits on sofa L.*)—I don't know—

JANE—(*Comes C.*)—Oh, tell him, sir. (*She looks at him sweetly. Ker. turns and smiles at her. William reprovingly brings her away from Ker.*)

KER.—Well, then, I am informed it is still competent for you to marry and comply with the terms of the will.

SHACK.—(*Going up to back of table L. of Lucy.*)—But the money I have already had—am I to pay up?

KER.—No; you must marry, and at once; and it will all be yours in five years' time.

SHACK.—(*Indicating Lucy*)—Allow me to introduce my future wife!

(*Mrs. C. gives a sigh.*)

WILLIAM.—(*To Mrs. Chad.*)—Yes, it's a pity, and you have tried, too.

KER.—So it's William's niece after all?

SHACK.—No—nonsense. That was more of William's zeal.

(*Introducing*)—Let me introduce you—Miss Lucy Norton—Mr. Kershaw.

KER.—I congratulate you both. (*Goes up a little.*)

WILLIAM—(*Coming forward with Jane C.*)—And so do we  
I'm sure, sir.

SHACK.—Thank you, William—and by the way, the same  
to you and Mrs. Tipson.

ALL—(*Kershaw sits in arm chair by fireplace*)—Mrs.  
Tipson.

JANE—Oh, how funny it sounds ; I beg your pardon, but  
until I get used to it, would you mind calling me—  
Jane? (*She puts her head on William's breast, he puts  
his arm round her waist.*)

CURTAIN.

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